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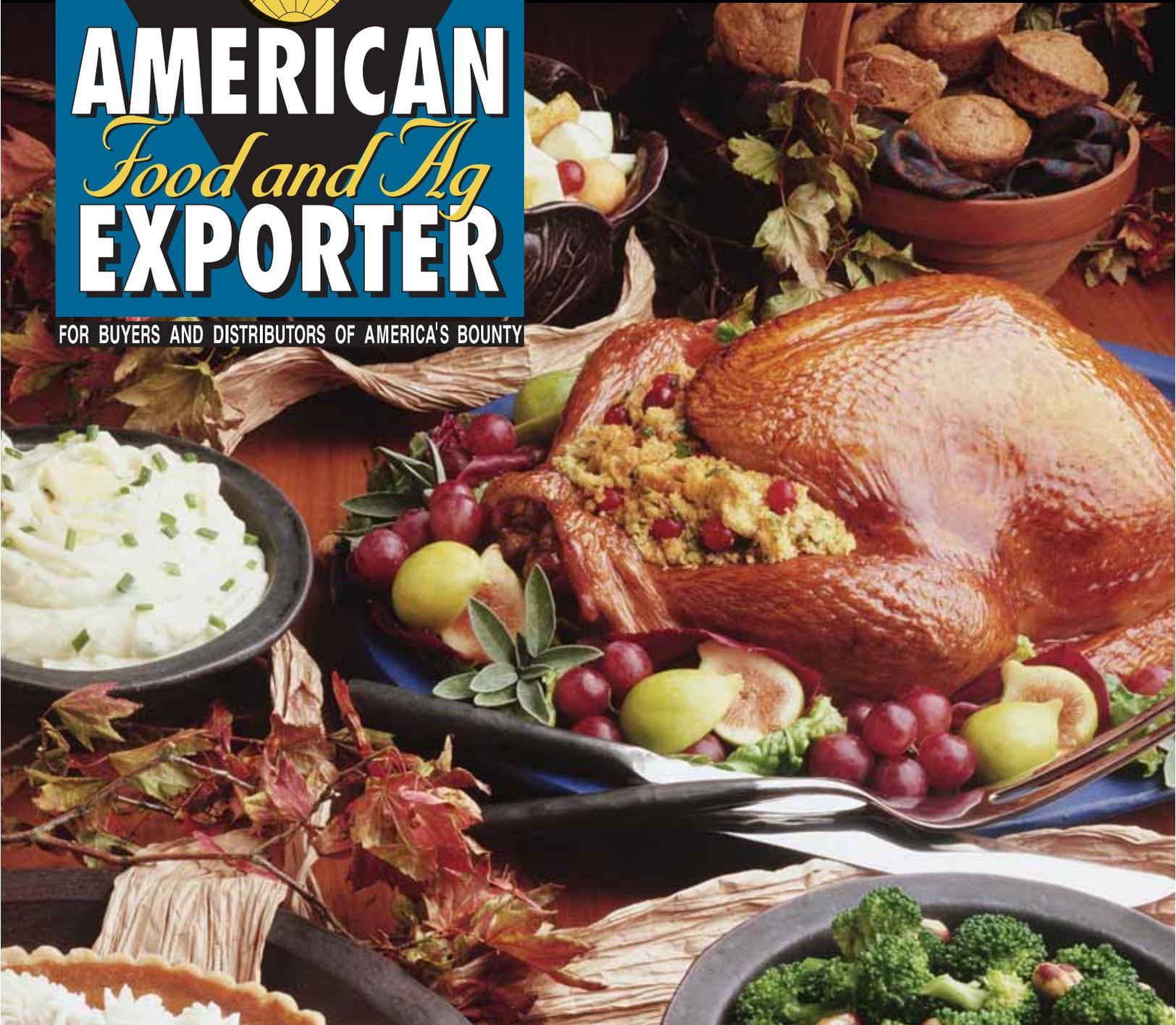


AMERICAN *Food and Ag* EXPORTER

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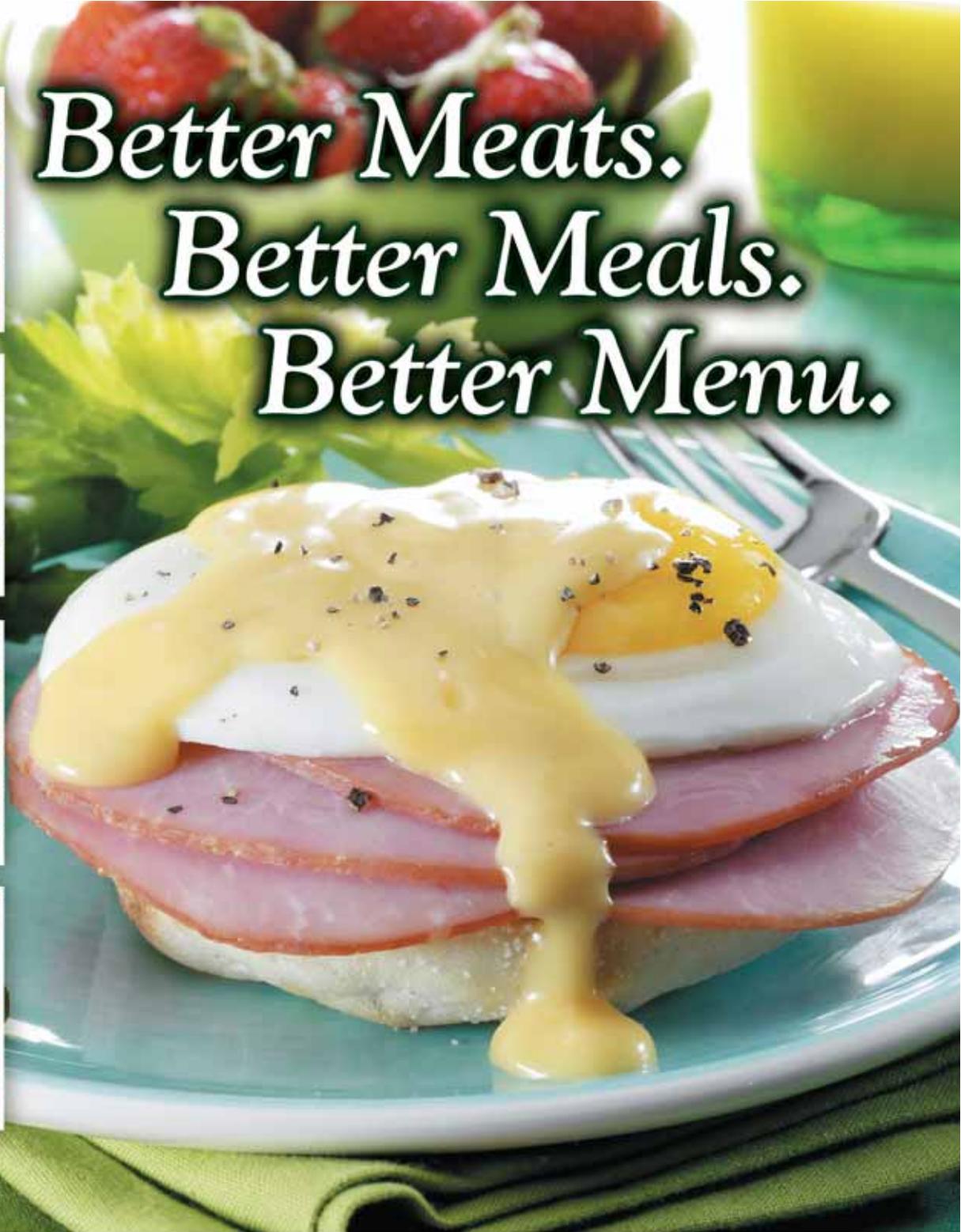
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E Pluribus Unum

American Thanksgiving

Legend has it that in 1621, the Plymouth, Massachusetts colonists and the Wampanoag Indians shared a feast on the occasion of the autumn harvest. The feast was not repeated, so it is not precisely correct to call it the first American Thanksgiving. Indeed the colonists did not call it Thanksgiving, as that would have implied a religious event, which would have been spent in Church thanking God for some particular thing, such as a victory over one's enemies.

It was not until 1863 when President Abraham Lincoln declared a Thanksgiving on November 21, 1621 took place. The date approximates the anchoring of the Mayflower at Cape Cod. It was not until 1939 that President Franklin D. Roosevelt fixed the date as the third Thursday in November.

Yet in the American tradition, that first Thanksgiving is iconographic.

The meal has certainly changed since that first celebration. The only things historians are certain were at the table that first Thanksgiving were venison and wild fowl. Surprisingly, most of the foods now considered staples of the modern Thanksgiving meal did not appear on the Pilgrim's first feast table.

Whatever was at that first Thanksgiving, the holiday has evolved into a quintessentially American holiday. If you serve any American expatriates or American tourists, they will certainly want to celebrate with their traditional favorites. These have evolved to be a meal built around a turkey and including sweet potatoes, stuffing, cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie and corn. But most feasts are much larger, including potatoes, apple pie, green beans and much more.

To help you offer this American tradition to Americans in your country as well as give you an opportunity to introduce your own native population to some American favorites, we've produced a cover story starting in page 11 that gives an excellent overview of the modern Thanksgiving. We have also produced a special article on turkey, which begins on page 16.

We also run a story, starting on page 25, celebrating the American apple and pear harvest. Apples, consumed copiously in pies and as baked apples for Thanksgiving, are also one of America's most important fruit exports.

Many sports fans who follow American football will recognize the names of the New York Jets, Dallas Cowboys, Detroit Lions, Green Bay Packers, Indianapolis Colts and Atlanta Falcons. Each of these teams will play on this year's Thanksgiving Day. Starting a little after noon on the American east coast, football will be watched by millions of viewers.

Before everyone sits down to have their Thanksgiving feasts, snacks of all sorts will be served during the football games, so here is another opportunity to expand upon the offerings of American food and agricultural products. Popcorn and almonds are but two of the snack items served on Thanksgiving Day. For more information on these items, please turn to pages 19 and 31, respectively.

And if you want to tip your hat to Old Abe Lincoln of Illinois, who really made Thanksgiving what it is today, as well as learn more about the variety of food items available in Illinois, please turn to page 28.

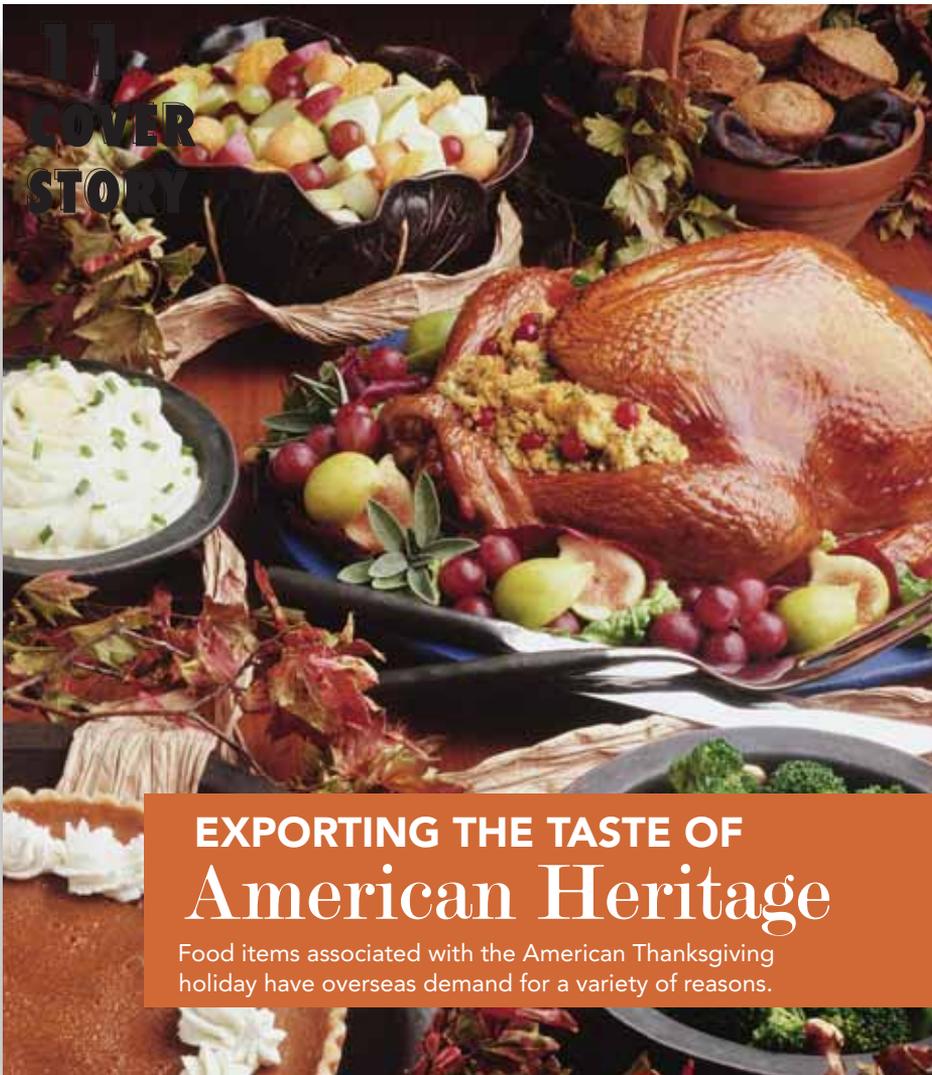
Promoting American Thanksgiving can provide a double bonus: As you serve American expatriates and tourists, you can also introduce the general population to these American favorites and, just maybe, succeed in developing new year-round import items for your program from America. 



Kenneth L. Whitacre
Publishing Director



Table of Contents



COVER STORY

EXPORTING THE TASTE OF American Heritage

Food items associated with the American Thanksgiving holiday have overseas demand for a variety of reasons.

FEATURE



MEET THE EXPORTERS9

DEPARTMENTS

MEATS 16

Turkey Holds Promise As A Prime Export

A strong and profitable domestic market is the only limit to how far these birds will travel.

SNACK FOODS 19

Convenience And Flavor Fuel Popcorn Export Sales

American popcorn exporters attribute the growing demand for popcorn overseas to the desire to eat healthy snacks that are fun, flavorful, nutritious and inexpensive.

FRUITS & VEGETABLES 25

Apple And Pear Variety Review

Taste, crispness, color and shelf-life are all factors in the growth of exported apples and pears.

REGIONAL PROFILE 28

Illinois Exports

Kim Hamilton, international marketing representative for the Illinois Department of Agriculture in Springfield, Illinois, talks about exports from her state.

DRIED FRUIT AND NUTS 30

Top 10 Almond Export Uses

Going beyond traditional uses, other newer and more inventive uses are arising as consumer demand for almonds increases.

IN EVERY ISSUE

Inside Notes.....	3
From the Editor.....	6
Export Watch	8
Exporter Profile	10
Advertising Index	34



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This region harvests more than one-quarter of the farm products in the U.S.A. This geographical region spans from the pristine state of Alaska, famous for its ocean-fresh seafood, to Hawaii, home of the Maui onion, fresh papaya, and robust coffee beans. In the desert states of Arizona and New Mexico, one can find such products as pecan nuts and spicy chiles.

The Rocky Mountain states offer fine beef, potatoes, onions and corn - all processed to buyers' specifications. And the West Coast states of California, Oregon and Washington offer an array of fresh fruits and vegetables, Pacific Ocean seafood, processed foods (canned, frozen and dehydrated), juices and other beverages and much more. We are proud that our food industry is often a trend-setter for the rest of the nation and other developed markets around the world.

In recent years, European buyers have been especially interested in our healthy and organic foods, ethnic products, food ingredients (such as nuts and dried fruits), breakfast cereals and dry mixes, frozen seafood and other high-quality food products.

European buyers have achieved successful buying endeavors by participating in several WUSATA activities such as: In-Store Promotions, Sales Missions to the Western U.S.A., Facility and/or Harvest Area Tours, One-on-One Buying Meetings with pre-screened Western companies, and more.

So if you are eager to find new food and beverage products from the Western U.S.A. contact WUSATA by e-mail (export@wusata.org) or visit our website at: www.wusata.org.

www.wusata.org

WUSATA



James E. Prevor
Editor-in-Chief



FROM THE EDITOR

James E. Prevor

Buying With Security

As trade and consumer buyers around the world look at the American market, they have lately heard a great deal about food safety issues. We have had food safety issues on spinach, ground beef and frozen foods, among others.

If you want to understand the food safety problems in America, you best look at the attacks on America of September 11, 2001.

The attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and on the Pentagon in Virginia sensitized America to the notion that some fanatics in the world want to hurt America and Americans. The country responded in many ways both diplomatic and military. It also responded with a range of domestic activities — from forming a new Department of Homeland Security to instituting new airport security regulations — to reduce the likelihood of an attack and to mitigate the effects of an attack.

One of the areas the government focused on was the possibility that the food supply might be used by terrorists to attack Americans. To reduce the likelihood that such an effort would succeed, our system to identify outbreaks of food borne illness — particularly a system known as PulseNet — has been significantly strengthened.

As a result, food borne illnesses that might have been dismissed years ago as “24-hour flus” or recognized as food poisoning but without a common cause are now tracked across the whole country and identified as outbreaks of food borne illness.

This is why comparative food safety claims across national borders are inherently suspect. No country in the world has a nationwide bulletin system like PulseNet, so no country’s food borne illness outbreak statistics are comparable to those of the USA.

When an individual gets sick and food borne illness seems likely, if he is ill enough to go to the doctor or the hospital, he is given a survey that inquires where and what he has eaten over the last few days.

Until very recently, almost all food borne illness cases were identified in the context of major gatherings — conventions, a big charity dinner, a wedding, etc. The reason for this is that only these large events typically provided the critical mass necessary for public health authorities to get back enough surveys in one place to identify the common source of an outbreak. In other words, in the context of a banquet, public health authorities could note that everyone who went to the hospital ate at the big hotel in town the previous evening.

On the other hand, nationally distributed product rarely produced sufficient survey responses to identify a source. After all, if people are healthy with strong immune systems, exposure to a pathogen may give

them a bad stomach ache, but they will probably recover and never see a doctor or hospital. This means only the largest outbreaks would produce enough illness that becomes known to public health authorities to identify a shared cause.

This is especially because food, particularly unbranded food such as loose greens or fresh meat, is a common factor. So whereas a report that consumers attended the same wedding is a very distinctive factor, the fact that a consumer had a salad or a hamburger is much less so.

So prior to September 11, 2001, if two or three people got sick in New York state, another two or three in California and another two or three in Illinois, these disparate cases located in distant places would probably never have been tied together as being caused by a particular brand of, say, spinach.

Today, however, the technology is so much better and the PulseNet system so much stronger that the same few illnesses, which years ago would have seemed isolated and unattributed events, will now be linked together as DNA from stool samples showing a common “Fingerprint” will be posted to the PulseNet system.

The comeuppance is a kind of irony, for as our food in the United States gets safer, the number of outbreaks increases.

Of course, this increase in outbreak frequency has led the food industry to redouble its efforts to avoid outbreaks by producing safer food. For example,

after the spinach outbreak of late 2006, the California leafy greens industry adopted a Marketing Agreement, which virtually all the handlers have signed, obligating them to follow new and tougher metrics in growing leafy greens.

What all this means for those looking to buy food and ag products from the United States is simple: The headlines are deceptive; U.S. food and ag products are safer than ever.

Feel free to ask your suppliers for substantiation of their food safety programs. All manufacturers should have a HACCP — short for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point — plan to show you. Farmers should be able to share their Good Agricultural Practices documents and also will frequently have third-party audits.

If you study these documents you will find them to be world class. So you can buy from the United States with ease of mind. The country is not only the source of a wide variety of delicious foods, it is also the home of the toughest food safety monitoring system in the world. That means you can buy with security. 

The headlines are deceptive; U.S. food and ag products are safer than ever.

Mr. Prevor invites your comments, questions and inquiries for products or supplies. You may call, write or fax Mr. Prevor by using the numbers on page 3 of this issue or by sending an E-mail message to Jimprevor@aol.com

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Export Watch is a regular feature of AMERICAN FOOD AND AG EXPORTER. If you would like information on any or all the products or companies featured here, please circle the corresponding number on the rapid response card between pages 10-11 and 26-27.



Announcements

Circle Reader Service # 800



Sauces And Seasonings

Starport Foods, Berkeley, California, makes authentic Asian, ethnic and fusion sauces and seasonings. Restaurants, resorts, schools, hospitals and supermarkets use our delicious sauces to create trend-setting dishes. Available in retail sizes, they are vegan, contain no MSG, shelf stable and made in the United States.

Circle Reader Service # 801



Tex-Mex Salsa

Renfro Foods, Inc., Fort Worth, Texas, announces a distribution agreement with United Kingdom-based Danfood, Ltd., to distribute four Mrs. Renfro's salsas, including black bean, chipotle corn, garlic and mango habanero, in the United Kingdom. Each jar contains 454 grams of authentic Tex-Mex salsa from the 67-year-old family business.

Circle Reader Service # 802



Salad Dressings

This June, Del Sol Food Company, Inc., Brenham, Texas, celebrated 25 years of delighting salad lovers with BRIANNAS fine salad dressings. Del Sol produces 12 award-winning flavors for the retail market and 14 flavors for the foodservice market. BRIANNAS is sold in all 50 states and internationally.

Circle Reader Service # 803



FHC China 2007

FHC China 2007, China's leading international food and hospitality trade event is gearing up for its big show Nov. 14-16, 2007, at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre in Pudong, China. FHC China will showcase all types of fresh and preserved foods, beverages, wines and spirits, bakery ingredients and equipment, confectionery, food service equipment and hospitality interiors.

Circle Reader Service # 804



Seoul Food & Hotel 2008

Thanks to a new look and format, Seoul Food & Hotel exhibition celebrated another successful event with record-breaking visitor and exhibitor figures. Many 2007 exhibition participants, from all sectors, including food, wine and spirits, and equipment and technology, have already signed up for the next event. The next Seoul Food & Hotel is set for May 14-17, 2008.

Circle Reader Service # 805



SIAL Montreal 2008

The shareholders of Expo Canada France, SIAL SA, Agri-Food Export Group Quebec Canada and the Association of Quebec Food Retailers announce that SIAL Montreal will now be an annual event. The next show is set for April 23-25, 2008, at Montreal's Palais des Congrès convention center. The 2008 show will again feature the Olive d'Or competition, the Agora Nutrition forum and a Trends & Innovations Showcase.

Circle Reader Service # 806



Tantalizers Stuffed Spudz

Eagle, Idaho-based ConAgra introduces its Foods Lamb Weston brand Tantalizers Stuffed Spudz appetizers. With premium ingredients wrapped in a delicious, battered crust, Stuffed Spudz will help you capitalize on the growing appetizer trend with tantalizing flavor. With potatoes continuing to be a popular food choice and appetizer sales on the rise, Stuffed Spudz are a winning combination for your menu.

Circle Reader Service # 807



Foodservice Solutions

Fresca Mexican Foods, Inc., Boise, Idaho, utilizes Gastro Primo, a creative food-solutions company that provides solutions for the foodservice industry, including on-board service, retail, food concept operations, as well as specialty projects regarding the ever-growing, ever-changing food industry. Gastro Primo owns the exclusive right to represent and serve as the agent for all Hong Kong and Macau, in addition to areas in southern China.

Circle Reader Service # 808



Tabletop Spices

McCormick and Company, Inc, Hunt Valley, Maryland, introduces its convenient, four-in-one seasonings package, McCormick Tabletop Spices. Two varieties, traditional and Italian, offer everyone a chance to give mealtime a personal touch. Beef, seafood, chicken, pork, salads, pizza, pasta, eggs and most any dish can benefit from a little spicing up.



New Products

Circle Reader Service # 809



Chocolate bars

Malie Kai Chocolates, Honolulu, Hawaii, introduces its new single-origins Waialua Estate chocolate bars. Only about 12,000 pounds of cacao are produced each year in Waialua on the north shore of Oahu, Hawaii, making Waialua Estate chocolate one of the rarest in the world. Grown in a small area, the cacao pods are carefully harvested and the nibs are fermented and dried in the warm Hawaiian sun. Chocolate artisans turn the nibs into exquisite chocolate, one small batch at a time.

Circle Reader Service # 810



Buttered Flavored Oil

ACH Food Companies, Inc., Memphis, Tennessee, showcases Whirl ZT butter-flavored oil that adds delicious flavor to everything you make, without the hassles of butter. Whirl ZT doesn't require melting or clarifying, and it doesn't need to be refrigerated. It's proven high-heat performance is perfect for grilling and sautéing applications, while its authentic butter flavor makes it a versatile flavor enhancer for vegetables, pasta, pizza crusts and more.

Circle Reader Service # 811



Popcorn Popper

Gold Medal Products presents its No. 2660SR Pop About popper. In the rental markets, there are two common challenges, ease of transport and inadequate power. The Pop About addresses these issues with its acrylic front and side panels, convenient "hand holds" and an exclusive energy management control system that ensures the popper gets a steady 120 volts of electricity regardless of the receptacle voltage.

MEET THE EXPORTERS

Photos by Mark Gold, Publisher

These pictures were taken at the Sial, Mercosur conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina on August 28 - 30, 2007



Sandy Renner, Food Export Alliance, and Brandon Davis, Food Export Association of the Midwest USA



Susana Andres de Lucas, Schreiber Foods Inc.



Mr. Claude O'Connor of Synders of Hanover with interpreter



Maureen and Renae Coughlin, Clabber Girl



Henry Gonzalez of Schwan's Food Company with interpreter



Sylvia Tirakian

From food industry novice to exporter, this daughter of immigrants is now broadening her horizons to other countries.

By Duane Craig

When you ask Sylvia Tirakian if she ever dreamed she'd be successfully importing exotic preserves from her former Soviet Bloc homeland of Armenia and exporting to Japan and beyond, she answers with laughter.

"If I had known what was really, really involved, I think I would have been too scared to even begin," she quips.

Tirakian, co-owner of Harvest Song in Great Neck, New York, spent years as an optical engineer before stepping into her current path of creating the formulas for and marketing unique fruit preserve products from the valley below Mount Ararat in Armenia.

"Engineering? It's all gone," she exclaims. "I enjoyed it, but I don't miss it. Being a daughter of immigrants I wanted to be 'mainstream,' and I wanted to be in the corporate world. Then once I accomplished being a good engineer, I wanted to do something different. But had I known what's involved in this..." her voice trails off questioningly.

Both she and her partner, James Tufenkian, not only had no contacts in the food industry, neither had they ever had any food business experience. But there was one thing they had that made all the difference. "We had a great affinity for the fruit of the Ararat Valley because it is so different in taste," she says.

On a fall day in 2005, she and Tufenkian met with USDA officials in Armenia to explore the possibility of bringing local farmers' products to the U.S. market. What they encountered was a mix of communist and capitalist ideals. Still, with Tirakian's command of the local language and the willingness of the people to try new things, a business opportunity was born.

She knew once the harvest was over, it would be another year before they'd be able to process new product, so she went to work devising and implementing the product formulas as the harvest was happening. This turned out to be an opportunity to pack on a commercial level and subsequently test the market with the new product that very year.

Gourmet shops in New York City responded enthusiastically, and before she knew it the orders started pouring in, even as the first product was still crossing the ocean. Next they approached well known chefs who began featuring the preserves in new recipes. Today they have nationwide delivery through various distributors. The preserves are in most Whole Foods stores, in some of the Wild Oats stores and in 270 Williams Sonoma stores. The company also

just opened a new 177-store distribution chain in Japan and is in negotiations with stores in the United Kingdom.

Products are shipped to overseas distributors via ocean freight.

There's no mistaking the passion and attention to detail Tirakian brings to her new enterprise. Every year she travels to Armenia during harvest time to meet with farmers and to watch as two canneries slow-cook fresh fruit into what has become wildly successful preserves. "This is the biggest pleasure I have walking in the Mount Ararat Valley, talking to our artisan preserve makers and working with them every day," she says. "It makes me appreciate their hard work but also re-energizes me seeing the wholesomeness and passion that goes into each jar."

"The fruit arrives daily at the canneries in small quantities," she explains. "Then they follow a slow preservation process. They get three lab certifications on every batch. We don't use any jelling components. The jam stays chunky because everything is done by hand and cooked as little as possible. The product contains only the sugar from the fruit and it doesn't have any color additives, and no pectin or preservatives. As it simmers and cooks, you have to add more fruit so the result of that is a totally different taste."

"In Armenia we do not give charity to our farmers," Tirakian says. "They work very hard so we give them fair trade prices by making sure at the beginning of March they are 80 to 85 percent funded and then the other 15 percent is held until harvest." Now she says new trees are being planted by the farmers and she believes they are more excited and feel their jobs are honored again.

Harvest Song artisanal preserves come in 12 flavors including Apricot, Sour Cherry, Wild Strawberry, Pumpkin and Apple, Peach, Golden Figs, Tea-Rose Petals, and Fresh Walnuts. The jars are topped with natural rice paper from Katmandu. The preserves are also gaining popularity as a favorite accompaniment for cheese. ☉



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EXPORTING THE TASTE OF American Heritage

Food items associated with the American Thanksgiving holiday have overseas demand for a variety of reasons.

BY TRISHA J. WOOLDRIDGE

Certain products, native to North America, have come to symbolize the culture of the United States. Every third Thursday of November, Americans sit down to a meal and, across the country, share a similar experience in food. It is a sense of unity. Turkey is served alongside stuffing, with side dishes of cranberries, sweet potatoes and pumpkin

pie. While all of these foods are iconic to American culture, they are also delicious, nutritious and offer new and exciting options in overseas markets.

Turkey is a healthy protein option that is high in nutrients and can be used in a variety of ways. According to the Washington, DC-based National Turkey Federation, a 3-ounce serving of boneless, skinless turkey breast contains 26 grams of protein, one gram of fat and zero grams of saturated fat. Cranberries are

an excellent source of vitamin C and antioxidants, while sweet potatoes and pumpkin are high in beta-carotene, fiber and vitamin A.

When marketing Ocean Spray products internationally, senior vice-president and chief operations officer international Stewart M. Gallagher says that the health benefits are what the company is pushing. "There's a healthy perception of cranberries. These same ideas and beliefs that fuel demand in the U.S.

fuel demand outside of the United States," says Gallagher from Ocean Spray's Lakeville-Middleboro, Massachusetts office.

On top of the health benefits, these foods all taste good regardless of any holiday associations.

"Of course, these foods are delicious at any time of year," says Deanna M.J. Ayala, agricultural attaché and deputy agricultural trade office director in Tokyo, Japan. "So, as they have been introduced in countries around the world, consumers are developing a taste for these items. In Japan, turkey is primarily used in sandwiches. But, pumpkins and cranberries are used in a host of products, including muffins and granola."

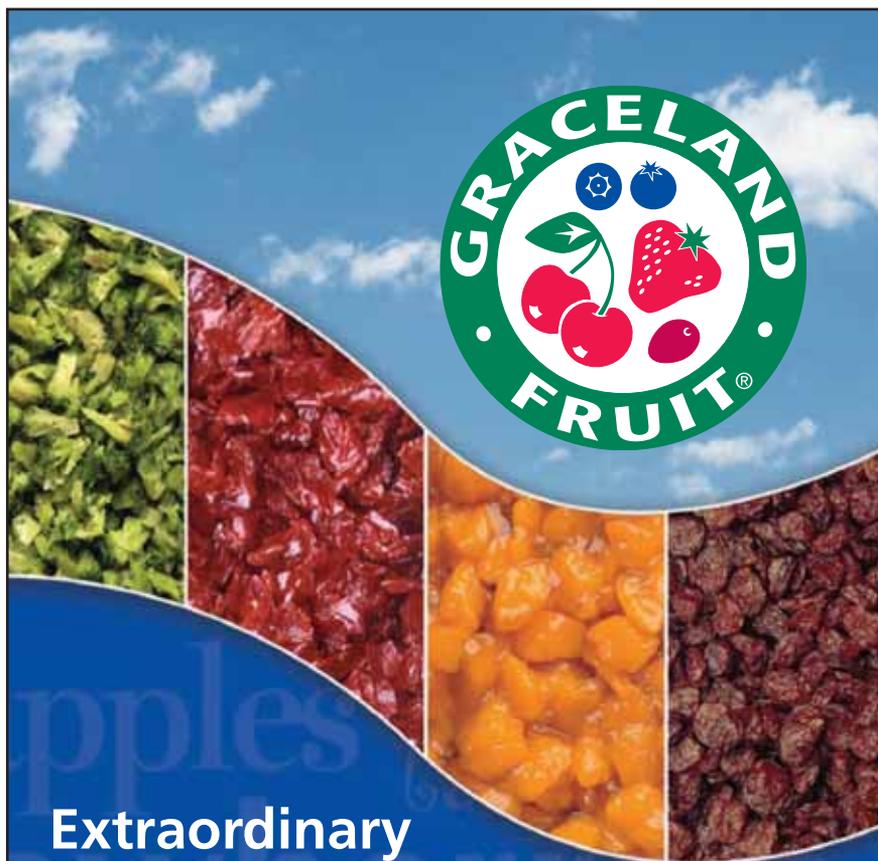
Longing For Flavors From Home

Ethnic groups who come to the United States bring with them their unique cultures, food and cooking styles. These trends create curiosity to those unfamiliar with the food and flavors. As Americans travel abroad, they, too, want their food to travel with them. While these flavors and foods are familiar to Americans, they are new, specialty options to consumers overseas.

"These markets, like many foreign markets, have been influenced by U.S. culture. People like to experiment with traditional U.S. cuisine," explains Joel Coleman, vice president and general manager of international sales for Butterball Limited Liability Corporation (LLC), in Mount Olive, North Carolina. "Aside from the curiosity factor, the resort and tourism industry also has increased turkey's popularity abroad, as have Americans who live and celebrate their traditional holidays overseas."

Coleman adds, "Americans who live outside the United States still want to celebrate Thanksgiving and be part of home, so they do look for Butterball turkey products when living abroad. This is especially true of our military serving overseas."

Ayala agrees, "Demand is influenced largely by the expatriate community. Since Thanksgiving is such an important holiday in the United States, most families want to recreate it no matter where they live. Further, the Thanksgiving menu is very special and specific. The story of the original Thanksgiving meal includes



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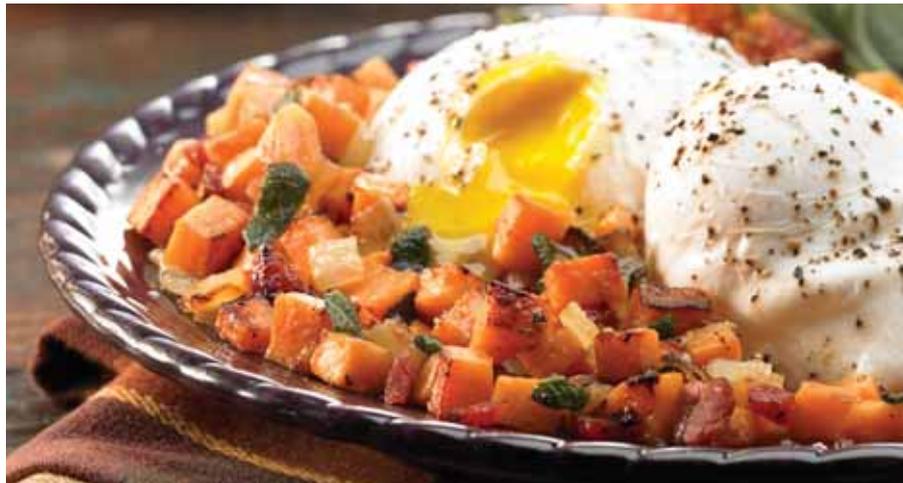


Photo courtesy of North Carolina Sweet Potato Commission

with sweet potatoes, and consumers are looking for healthy foodstuffs.”

Holidays And So Much More

Aside from Canada, which celebrates its own Thanksgiving holiday about five weeks before the United States does, overseas markets do not share this holiday, so markets for “Thanksgiving” foods do not exist outside of the North American culture. However, Christmas is celebrated in many countries around the world and these foods can be offered as “holiday” fare.

“Christmas is the most typical holiday during which [overseas consumers] celebrate with Butterball turkey as an entrée,” says Coleman. “Thanksgiving, which really is indigenous to the U.S. culture, is not widely recognized outside our country.”

For Ocean Spray, the company’s other cranberry products, such as juices, fresh cranberries, and dried cranberries, sell much more than the traditional Thanksgiving style of preparation, cranberry sauce. However, cranberry sauce is available in Canada, the United Kingdom,

reference to turkey, corn, pumpkin, cranberries and so forth. Thus, most families will seek out the familiar dishes they know and love. Without turkey, it simply would not be Thanksgiving.”

Bell’s stuffing and seasoning mixes, a brand of East Weymouth, Massachusetts-based Brady Enterprises Incorporated, was exported to Asian markets for the first time in 2006. National sales manager Desi Gould observes from the

experience, “People in Japan are looking for things people enjoy in America.”

“In the UK and Europe, the ethnic culture is diverse,” says executive director Sue Johnson-Langdon of the North Carolina Sweet Potato Commission in Smithfield, North Carolina. “People from other countries where they had sweet potatoes readily available has caused demand to increase. Another major reason is the healthful benefits associated

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parts of Western Europe and in various Asian countries.

"In Mexico, turkey is even highly used in further-processed items and clearly promoted as 'turkey ham,' 'turkey hot dogs' and more," Coleman adds.

In some cases, however, the foods have brought parts of the cultural holiday with them.

"Subway Japan is going to promote U.S. turkey from October 31 to the end of this year," according to Izumi Amano of the Stone Mountain, Georgia-based Poultry and Egg Export Council (USAPEEC) Japan office. "The item is a turkey breast and cranberry sauce sandwich. USAPEEC is going to contribute some budget for the production of this special menu."

Furthermore, Amano adds, "A high-end supermarket chain, Kinokuniya (8 outlets), will promote turkey targeting Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons. They have ordered 300 cases of turkey items this season and prepared to offer a wide range of sizes of the products. In addition, they will develop and make original [point-of-purchase] materials as

part of sales promotion."

What Are The International Markets For These Products?

In many cases, the demand is pretty significant for foods that Americans would associate with Thanksgiving, though overseas consumers want more variety, such as deli or other preparations of turkey, local takes on sweet potato recipes and cranberry juice.

"There was \$400 million [US] of sales that cranberries produced outside of the U.S.," says Ocean Spray's Gallagher. "It has grown from \$100 million, 10 to 12 years ago." He also estimates that, of the \$400 million worth of sales, \$30 million were for cranberry sauce.

"Those are big numbers for a product that is basically consumed in a 30-day window for the year; that is a short time period," says Gallagher.

Coleman describes, "Butterball's top five export markets include Mexico, which is far and away the largest market, Central America, the Caribbean (including Bahamas, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic), Asia and Russia. The demand

LOST IN TRANSLATION

Without the cultural base of the Thanksgiving holiday, marketing foods associated with the American tradition can get lost in translation. Also, different government agencies may have ingredient specifications or limitations that the United States government does not, so ingredients and procedures must be carefully attended to.

Stewart Gallagher, senior vice president and chief operations officer international for Ocean Spray, Lakerville-Middleboro, Massachusetts, describes how the company's overseas marketing plan is similar to what the company did 50 to 70 years ago for domestic consumers. "Many people [overseas] do not know what a cranberry is, so the marketing is not that our product tastes better than the competition. We must explain what a cranberry is, what it tastes like and what is so good about it. It tastes unlike anything before it and the health benefits are valuable."

For Brady Enterprises, based in East Weymouth, Massachusetts, timing is everything. Though the introduction of its Bell's brand stuffing and seasoning mixes was a success in 2006, there was a hurdle that had to be overcome in 2007. According to national sales manager, Desi Gould, "They invited us to come back this year, but there needed to be a change in the formula that we couldn't implement in time."

Gould elaborates, "There was one ingredient in the bread, and our contact for bread is exclusive to us. There was something with the dough condition that [the Japanese] government doesn't allow. We had to find something to replace it, but there wasn't enough time." 

for turkey, particularly in Mexico, Central America and Caribbean nations, is strong."

In regards to the Asian introduction of Bell's stuffing and seasoning mixes, Gould says, "All indications are that it did go over very well. The feedback was that everything we sent over was gone."

"International sales of sweet potatoes represent 5 to 8 percent of total ship-



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ments from North Carolina," says Johnson-Langdon of the North Carolina Sweet Potato Commission. Some of the countries that sweet potatoes are exported to are the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Spain, Denmark and Germany, with the United Kingdom having the highest demand.

Marketplaces and Marketing Tips

Availability of "Thanksgiving" items varies from location to location, and marketing techniques also need to be adjusted to best suit the product and the market.

"Sweet potatoes are available in bulk in the larger grocery stores and also through foodservice distributors in larger urban areas of a country," says Johnson-Langdon. "One example is that they are readily available in London, but not so in Birmingham, UK."

Butterball's Coleman states, "Most turkey products can be easily found in the deli sections of retail chains in our Latin American markets."

"In the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, and France, [cranberries] are in mainstream grocery stores," says Gallagher, "but there are many countries where we simply use export distributors. They take the title and resell it in the marketplace. They can skim high end, specialty stores."

When it comes to marketing, Gallagher says Ocean Spray focuses on certain markets. "First on English-speaking markets, where there is already a good translation of the product. It's easier to explain. The challenge we're now starting is to translate the name, to translate 'cranberry' and to tell the story in different languages."

For sweet potatoes, Johnson-Langdon describes, "The Commission, and also in conjunction with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, actively promotes sweet potatoes internationally."

Some of the methods are, "press releases and desk-side meetings with newspaper and magazine food editors in the UK," as well as foodservice trade shows and a "sweet potato seminar presented by two chefs from North Carolina to executive chefs in London."

The Commission also offers international recipe development and an executive chef competition in London.

For Butterball, the company's international methods are not very different. "There is active marketing and advertising in our international markets," tells Cole, "particularly in Mexico and Central America. We employ billboards, radio, television, mobile advertising on our delivery trucks and print ads to promote the Butterball brand abroad."

Even though they travel outside of their native customs and land, foods associated with the American holiday of Thanksgiving carry overseas appeal.

Whether it is the influence of American expatriates, the American culture, the health benefits or just curiosity and interest in a new food and flavor, overseas consumers create a substantial market for the foods deeply rooted in the United States culture. 🌐

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MEATS

Turkey Holds Promise As A Prime Export



A strong and profitable domestic market is the only limit to how far these birds will travel.

By Duane Craig



The tryptophan in turkey is known to make people sleepy, but when it comes to exports the birds are the sleepers. There are those who see global markets waiting for them.

Exporters have a whole world of potential for selling turkey, says David Harvey, poultry analyst for the USDA Economic Research Service in Washington, DC. He thinks areas that would be good candidates are those where the people eat a fair amount of poultry and have expanding personal incomes over the long term. He says when people have increasing incomes, they increase their protein consumption.

“If [exporters] were to tap into some of these emerging markets in places where it looks like they’re going to have relative stability and growing incomes, those would be the places to look at,” he adds. “I think a lot of the poultry exporters are looking at some areas in Africa and some in Asia too — not Japan or Korea, but Viet Nam, China and some of the West African nations.”

“Yes it is a growing export item as more western tastes and lifestyles spread around the world,” says Carlos Ayala, vice president of international for Perdue Farms Inc. in Salisbury, Maryland. “There are now more Subways than McDonalds world-wide, popularizing the notion of a turkey sandwich. Other growing concepts, like Starbucks and Pacific Coffee, offering more than just coffee and branching out into sandwiches, has added to the surge.”

Dr. Mark Lobstein, director of technical services for the USA Poultry & Egg Export Council (USAPEEC) in Stone Mountain, Georgia, casts his eyes to Europe and Australia. “We certainly like to think that these areas are a growing market,” he says.

“Only eight percent of our total volume being produced is exported,” says Lobstein. “There are considerable markets that really haven’t been tapped. Two of those are the European Union (EU) and Australia. We’ve got companies in Australia clamoring for U.S. cooked turkey products. They know the

product is out there and available, but from a regulatory standpoint, it is not getting access to their markets. We don’t even ship to those two markets right now and I am focused on trying to get access to them within the next year or so.”

“The EU could be a very big market,” agrees Harvey. “There are varying interpretations as to how sanitary levels should be achieved, and the United States goes about it in one way and the EU goes about it in another way. So we have conflicting standards on how to reach certain levels of sanitation and because of that our products can’t be shipped to the EU.”

New Markets

Harvey points out that there are many areas of the world where turkey is relatively unknown but that could be excellent export opportunities.

“It’s going to vary from market to market,” says Lobstein. “Whole birds are more seasonal while turkey cuts are gaining pop-



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According to the World Health Organization, people can't get bird flu from properly handled and cooked food. To be safe, poultry products should be stored and prepared apart from other foods and should always be fully cooked.



ularity in various markets. Then there are the ground turkey products, or mechanically separated turkey, that are incorporated into turkey franks and turkey bologna. And then you've got your luncheon meats gaining a lot more popularity in the health food arena. We promote health-consciousness worldwide, and so different markets take different commodities."

"All countries are great candidates," says Purdue's Ayala. "There are very few countries in this world that produce turkey, so this protein market has much less competitive than chicken. Regions with high Muslim populations, like the Middle East, are also great candidates, because value-added turkey products are a great replacement for pork products."

Ayala cites turkey ham and turkey bacon being good substitutes for pork. He also recognizes a growing demand for Halal, (meaning permissible for a Muslim to eat), processed turkey products in Muslim, Middle Eastern and Asian nations. Purdue is already able to provide these Halal-certified turkey products to the Middle East.

"From a value-added standpoint," he adds, "mostly sliced foodservice deli meats

are being sold. We are just starting to see it show up on the retail shelves in non-traditional countries, like China."

Exports are almost always products or parts, says USDA's Harvey "Most people in other countries are not in the market for large birds. If you go to the EU where they do eat some turkey, you'll see that the birds are much smaller. I don't think anyone over in France, for example, is going to be interested in a 21-pound turkey."

"Ideally we'd love to increase everybody's consumption of poultry products," says Lobstein. "Once you get past the governmental barriers, product awareness comes to the front."

Scott Hansohn, manager of technical communication for USAPEEC, expounds on the council's activities relative to inspiring more poultry use in other countries. "We are a non-profit association that works really closely with the government to increase exports into already established markets and to open up new ones. We have 13 offices around the world, and they work a lot with the foreign governments. So when we're talking about markets like the EU, where we are restricted going in our first step, most of

the time is to get past that trade barrier."

USAPEEC also brings the story of U.S. turkey to other countries through in-store sampling, trade shows and bringing together chefs and resort and hotel restaurant managers to help make them more familiar with the products. USAPEEC also holds deli seminars to teach supermarket employees how to present and cut the product.

Robust Domestic Picture

While parts of the world market may be waiting for U.S. turkey, there are factors at home that bear on the level of production for

export. USAPEEC's Lobstein sees production costs as key in that equation with regulatory costs and feed costs taking the lead. "It's getting tougher and tougher to increase the production," he says.

"When it comes to environmental controls and feed costs, and now our big concern with ethanol production taking up a lot of our domestically produced corn, you may be talking about fractions of a penny in increased production costs but that can make it or break it. Anything adding to that cost has got to be passed on to the consumer, and you certainly want to limit your production cost if you want to make a profit and stay in business."

"One of the big things on the growing side will be how this whole ethanol debate works out over the next five to ten years," adds Harvey. "We don't know whether it's going to be a long term trend on higher grain prices or if 10 years from now, corn won't be used anymore for ethanol because they've changed over to things like switch grass."

The other factor affecting turkey exports is the attractive prices turkey brings in the United States. Lobstein explains that the domestic turkey business is well supported and producers are comfortable with catering to that market. Harvey cites the domestic wholesale prices for turkey being eight to 10 percent above 2006 prices as one reason some producers may not be aggressively pursuing turkey exports.

"It has to do with relative prices here, exchange rates, and turkey prices versus broiler prices because there is some level of substitution between the two products," he says. "I think in the last couple of years, China's been a really big growth market but Mexico is what drives turkey exports. Mexico accounts for well over half of all our turkey exports."

"I certainly think the export market is necessary and can grow, but it's just a matter of what the producers are willing to deal with," concludes Lobstein. He explains that exporting perishables has its challenges, and things like avian influenza reports and market factors can add to those challenges by causing countries to look for ways to reject product, sometimes after it has reached its destination. 



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Convenience And Flavor Fuel Popcorn Export Sales

Photo Courtesy of Preferred Popcorn



American popcorn exporters attribute the growing demand for popcorn overseas to the desire to eat healthy snacks that are fun, flavorful, nutritious and inexpensive.

By Liz Parks



Photo Courtesy of Crown Products, Inc.

It's a love affair that for many Americans started in the dark as a movie screen illuminated and the smell of fresh popped corn floated through out the cinema.

That's the way many overseas customers first came to experience popcorn as well, and now, American brands of popcorn are satisfying the taste buds of people from Bangkok to Paris.

Much of the popcorn exported and sold overseas by American processors is unpoped bulk packages of corn kernels ranging in size from 20 to 50 pounds plus, but as the global demand for convenience foods grows, even in Third World countries, there is an increasingly strong market for microwave popcorn.

"In general, popcorn itself is fairly well established worldwide and it is still known as an American snack," says Tom Mathews, export sales manager for Indianapolis, Indiana-based Weaver Popcorn Company. "The challenge now is entering new markets with microwave popcorn, especially in various markets in the Mid-East and Asia."

According to the Chicago, Illinois-based National Popcorn Institute (NPI), the trade association for popcorn processors, worldwide sales of popcorn are steadily increasing, but Americans consume more popcorn than the citizens of any other country — 17 billion quarts of popped popcorn annually or 54 quarts per man, woman and child.

American popcorn exporters attribute the growing demand for popcorn overseas to the desire to eat healthy snacks that are fun, flavorful, nutritious and inexpensive.

Dierdre Flynn, executive director for NPI, says the biggest trend in popcorn sales today, both in America and abroad, is the growth in microwavable popcorn. "Traditional methods of preparing popcorn were the first to take off, but microwave popcorn now is starting to take hold in most markets outside the United States," says Flynn.

Jeff Teague, vice president for Metairie, Louisiana-based Crown Products, Inc., which ships bulk popcorn in 50-pound and 20-kilo bags as well as microwave popcorn to approximately 60 overseas markets, predicts that growth in the microwave sector

will continue to grow significantly as the consumer demand for convenience takes deeper root in overseas markets just as it did in American markets.

New Flavor Trends

As demand for microwavable popcorn grows, so too does the need to create new flavors to appeal to consumer taste preferences in a broad spectrum of regions and countries.

Overseas consumers vary widely in their flavor tastes, said Teague. "Depending on the country, some consumers, particularly consumers in South America and Africa, prefer butter-flavored popcorn.

But some countries, including a lot of European countries, prefer a sweet or sugar-flavored popcorn while some countries and regions, especially in Latin America, prefer spicier flavors. "I've found that when consumers in Latin American countries have a chance to try spicier popcorn, they tend to like it," says Teague.

Crown Products, said Teague, is currently extending its range of flavors for its exported

OVERCOMING CONCERNS

In the past, there have been news reports about some people, working in popcorn processing plants, experiencing difficulties with their lungs because of exposure to a key ingredient, diacetyl, in the production of butter flavored microwavable popcorn.

But earlier this year, what appears to be the first case of a consumer developing respiratory problems surfaced. In a July warning letter to federal regulators made public on September 4, 2007, Dr. Cecil Rose of Denver, Colorado's National Jewish Medical and Research Center said doctors believe they had treated the first case of a consumer who developed lung disease as a result of repeated daily exposure to fumes from microwaving popcorn.

In response to these findings, the Flavor and Extract Manufacturers Association recommended that its members reduce the amount of diacetyl in butter flavorings while the FDA is "considering the safety and regulatory issues it raises."

At least one popcorn processor, Indianapolis, Indiana-based Weaver Popcorn Co., has already converted to a non-diacetyl flavoring product, and at least one more processor, Shannon-Illinois-based Tee Lee Popcorn, Inc., is in the process of converting.

"We follow strict safety guidelines in manufacturing our products, so we've had no incidents among our associates related to diacetyl expo-

sure," says Mike Weaver, president of Weaver Popcorn. "However, we know consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about this issue, so we've taken it out of our flavorings. It was a challenge to eliminate diacetyl from our flavorings and still maintain the great buttery taste that consumers love, but we've done it."

"Most companies," says Jeff Teague, vice president for Metrairie, Louisiana-based Crown Products, Inc., "have addressed the issue of processing microwavable popcorn in poorly ventilated facilities, and, while I don't want to minimize any potential food safety issue, poor ventilation doesn't seem to be a problem any longer."

In the case of the consumer who may have developed a lung disease by inhaling microwavable popcorn, Ken Weaver, vice president of sales for Shannon, Illinois-based Tee Lee says he can see a possible "correlation, but not necessarily causation. I know many people who eat microwavable popcorn on a daily basis and I have never heard of any consumer before having respiratory problems linked to popcorn."

There is also a strong concern in many countries for foods that have not been genetically modified, several exporters noted. Popcorn, of course, has not been genetically altered so that, says Teague, "is another positive selling point that we are able to share with our importers and that they then share with their customers." 

microwavable popcorn, including experimenting with a chili flavor as well as new flavors for its sweet popcorn.

One popcorn exporter, Norm Krug, chairman and chief executive officer of Chapman,

Nebraska-based Preferred Popcorn, LLC, has tasted a fish-flavored popcorn made by an importer from Preferred Popcorn's bulk popcorn in Bangkok. Another exporter, Shannon, Illinois-based Tee Lee Popcorn, was

once asked to develop a pork-rind flavor for Russia. Being a kosher certified manufacturer, however, Tee Lee declined, says vice president of sales, Ken Weaver.

Krug notes that many consumers in over-



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Nebraska's Morrison Farms popcorn into theatres, are also selling it to stores in both microwavable containers and ready-to-eat bagged pre-popped form.

"Demand for higher quality popcorn,"

Because taste preferences vary so widely from country to country, region to region, importers need to really understand their markets so they can meet the taste preferences of their specific customers.

seas countries have different tastes "so our challenge is to adapt to their tastes. Most Asian countries prefer either sweet or salty popcorn. We've adapted to that. You can alter the taste of popcorn quite easily based on the seasonings you apply to it."

Because taste preferences vary so widely from country to country, region to region, importers need to really understand their markets so they can meet the taste preferences of their specific customers.

Some regions, Weaver noted, prefer flavor variations that build on a butter flavoring base, such as garlic and herb butter popcorn,

popular in eastern and central European countries; other regions, such as Asia, prefer variations on a sweet flavor.

Te Lee has experimented with exotic flavors, such as wasabi, but so far has not perfected one the company considers broad enough in appeal to be mass produced.

Frank Morrison, owner and president of Clearwater, Nebraska-based Nebraska Popcorn Inc, which makes the Morrison Farms popcorn brand, says the demand overseas is for "high expansion, high quality, mostly theatre-type corn."

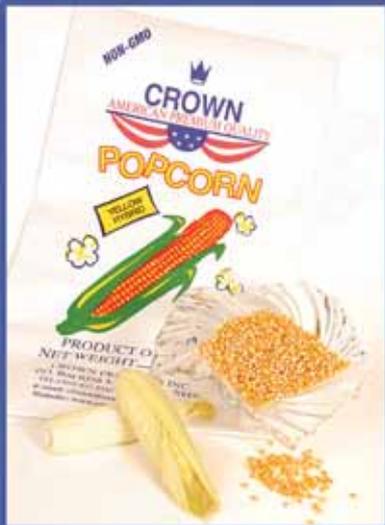
Some importers, in addition to selling

says Morrison, "is increasing. It's becoming a more popular snack as time goes on, and it is spreading to more countries."

While different countries like China and Taiwan have regional flavor preferences,



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which local distributors try to meet by adding flavoring ingredients like bay oil made from bay leaves, the best selling export flavors, says Morrison, remain the butter and natural flavors, and the most popular color for popcorn sold overseas is yellow.

New Market Entries

As other nations have better access to US exporter items, they are able to engage in the global economy and increase their overall wealth, which means they can buy more of our products.

In some countries, like Russia, says Tee Lee's Weaver, consumers are now able to buy popcorn in their local cinemas where for "years and years, they couldn't. Their theatres were not allowed to sell popcorn. Now they have transitioned into making that more of a component of their theatre-going culture."

Cinemas, together with the desire to emulate some American culinary habits, seem to be driving sales of popcorn, Weaver adds, in counties like Bulgaria, Rumania, South Africa and Japan.

Cinemas, agrees Krug, are the place where most overseas consumers first develop a

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— Source: National Popcorn Institute

taste for popcorn. "The fact that popcorn is a good profit center for cinemas is also a good way for the product to be introduced," he adds.

Currently, most of the American popcorn that is sold overseas carries a well known brand, whether it is sold in bulk in cinemas or is sold in portions as microwavable popcorn.

But down the line, some American exporters of popcorn believe that sales of pri-

vate label or store brand popcorns will begin to increase, partly because they will be even more inexpensive than branded popcorn.

Today, says Teague of Crown Products, "the major America popcorn manufacturers have done a pretty good job getting their brand out there in many countries. But I think we will soon see private brands go in and try to take market share."

Tee Lee's Weaver too noted an increase in sales of private label popcorn, but, he added,

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the growth in private label is, to a large degree, paralleling the growth in branded popcorn. "We have seen a strong interest in both our brand of microwave popcorn and in private label popcorn. They seem to be meeting the needs of different groups of consumers overseas just as they do here."

Although not a brand, the label "Made in USA" signals to consumers and importers that the popcorn they are buying will be consistent in quality, says Weaver.

Marketing Support

Importers are often helped in their marketing initiatives with programs supported by American exporters. Weaver Popcorn, for example, has a variety of marketing programs that the company offers importers, including programs to support in-store tasting demonstrations as well as ads in television and print and promotional campaigns that tie into American movies being released overseas.

"We help fund in-store product taste demonstrations," says Weaver Popcorn's Mathews. "We do the basic planning and we lay out very comprehensive marketing program in terms of options for imports, but we rely in importers to know their market and

what works, we rely on their expertise."

When Weaver Popcorn ties into a movie promotion, it is usually with either a major action adventure film like *National Treasure* or a family film like *Garfield*, "popcorn movies that appeal to a wide market," says Mathews.

Virtually unanimously, American exporters of popcorn agree that the best way for importers to increase both their sales and the sales of their customers is to support popcorn with the introduction of new flavors tailored to meet the tastes of the various regions of the world, with point of sale materials including large displays for microwavable popcorn that describe the nutritional benefits of popcorn, and with in-store taste sampling demonstrations including popping the corn fresh within the store, letting the smell attract consumers.

"Nowadays, with globalization," says Teague, "we are seeing in-store demonstrations pretty much all over the world." ☉

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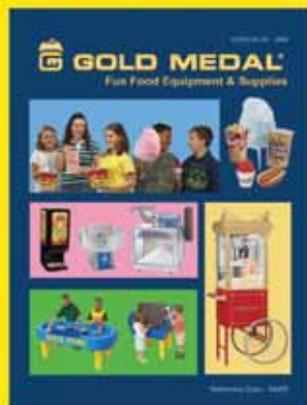
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Apple And Pear Variety Review

Photo Courtesy of Pear Bureau Northwest



Taste, crispness, color and shelf-life are all factors in the growth of exported apples and pears.

By Barbara Robison



Variety is key in today's global marketing of fresh apples and pears. Most consumers don't just look for an apple or pear; they seek Red or Golden Delicious, Fuji or Gala apple, or when purchasing pears they shop for a Bosc, Anjou, or perhaps an Asian Pear.

As these varieties gain acceptance in international markets, the United States is adding newer varieties to the mix to entice fresh produce shoppers.

Kris Merceca is executive director of the Arlington, Virginia-based U.S. Apple Export Council, representing apple growers and shippers in 12 states, including California, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Utah, Vermont and Virginia.

The Council does not represent Washington State as Washington has its own export programs. "We are seeing a lot of mixed load apple shipments, with different varieties making up the loads. While newer U.S. apple varieties are coming into export markets as volumes increase, shipments of the older variety McIntosh are increasing in

South America, and Empires and Galas are gaining popularity in Central America."

James Allen, president, New York Apple Association, Inc., Fishers, New York, reports that the United Kingdom is a major market for New York's McIntosh and Empire varieties, and customers in Latin and Central America especially enjoy the state's Red Delicious apples. "We have applied to the USDA's (United States Department of Agriculture) Market Access Program (MAP) for funds, so we can look at some new export markets for our apples," Allen adds.

Cohen Produce Marketing, Inc. is an on-site inspection, procurement, and marketing agent, specializing in apples, pears, cherries, and stone fruit, exporting apples primarily from New York, Pennsylvania and Washington State. Howard Cohen, vice president of export sales, says, "Exports of the Gala variety, with its sweet, unique flavor, are growing very fast. Red and Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, and Fuji are doing well, and the Red Delicious is especially liked in Middle Eastern markets. The newer apple varieties are expensive, so we'll have to see

greater production before there are extensive shipments in export markets."

Holly Whetstone, communications and marketing specialist, Michigan Apple Committee, DeWitt, Michigan, reports that many newer apple varieties are in limited production, and domestic demand is high so exports are more restricted.

"Our growers are concentrating on the better recognized varieties, such as the Gala and Fuji, with special emphasis on the Caribbean and Latin American countries, including Mexico," says Whetstone. "Most of these countries are looking for sweet-flavored apples, while the Scandinavian countries prefer a sweet-tart flavored apple."

Washington State ships apples to over 50 markets, and Rebecca Baerveldt, export manager, Washington Apple Commission, Wenatchee, Washington, reports that the developing countries are more price-sensitive when it comes to buying the fruit.

Because demand is so high for the newer varieties in the United States, the "exotic fruit" varieties, such as the Ambrosia or the Cripps Pink variety (Pink Lady), have more

market opportunities in the United Kingdom or Canada. Washington State sees potential niche markets in these countries for the Premium Red Delicious. Baerveldt also reports there are increases for organically grown apples in the export market.

The Cripps Pink variety is available November through July. It is a firm, crisp-fleshed apple, with a unique, tangy tart-sweet flavor. Pink Lady is a branded apple of the Cripps Pink variety, with a pink blush over a yellow-green background. The apple's denseness makes it firm with a long storage life. It is also slow to turn brown when sliced so it retains its bright white appearance for a greater length of time. It is good for baking and freezes well.

The Honey Crisp and Ambrosia are two newer apple varieties that appear to have a future in export as production expands. The Ambrosia and another variety, the Jazz, are known as "club" varieties, which means particular shippers have the exclusive right to grow them.

Randy Steensma, manager, Honey Bear Tree Fruit LLC, Wenatchee, Washington, a marketing agent for apples and pears, says, "The demand for the Honey Crisp variety is exploding in the United States, making it

more expensive for export. To introduce it into importing countries, we are shipping some to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Canada and South America. We want to begin building the market for the anticipated increased future production."

The Honey Crisp has a mostly red skin,

Fresh pear export markets continue to expand for the United States.

with a yellow background. It has a sweet, slightly tart flavor, is juicy and is especially known for its crisp texture. The Ambrosia is a medium-size apple with red color and some striping on a creamy yellow background. It is juicy, has a crisp texture and is a good snacking apple.

"The number one attraction for the Ambrosia is its excellent, unusual taste," states Stuart McDougall, owner, McDougall & Sons, Inc., Wenatchee, Washington, an apple and pear grower and packer and an approved grower of the Ambrosia and Jazz

"club" varieties. "Also it doesn't turn brown as quickly as some other varieties making it more attractive for salads and eating out of hand," he adds.

"The Ambrosia is presently not a big export variety. However, it is working well for us in Brazil. England is a major market for the Pink Lady with its sweet-tart flavor, and we've found Asians seem to like the sweeter apple varieties," states Tony Buak, director of export sales, Columbia Marketing International (CMI), Wenatchee, Washington, a grower, packer and shipper of Washington apples, pears and cherries.

The Jazz variety has a strong red/maroon color, broken up by areas of green, yellow, and orange. It is juicy, crisp and its flavor is one of its best features. "This is our first year of storing and packing the Jazz and we've noticed it has a real long storage life," says McDougall.

Pear Varieties For Export

Fresh pear export markets continue to expand for the United States. Exports of pears from Oregon and Washington represent 25 to 28 percent of production, with 33 percent of that during the winter pear season and the remainder for summer pears. This



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year's pear crop is estimated to be good, with sizes running larger than last year, according to Jeff Correa, international marketing director, Pear Bureau Northwest, Milwaukie, Oregon.

As in the case of apples, the greatest export market opportunities for the more traditional pear varieties, such as the Bosc, are in the developing markets in Central America and other areas. "Russia, Brazil and India are potential markets for our pears, especially India, where we've been about two years behind apples in seeing expansion. We believe this year our exports will experience real growth. The market likes bigger fruit with premium grades, which fits our crop projections," says Correa.

Red is definitely "in" when it comes to exporting pears, according to Correa. "The Star Crimson is available from late August through September, and it is a variety we have been promoting in our 'Variety of the Month' campaign in Mexico. The season is short, so our promotion not only helped build this year's market, but we look to develop greater shipments in the future."

The Star Crimson is a bright red-colored pear that eats exceptionally well. It is more delicate than some varieties so it has a short-

er shelf life and presents some shipping difficulties.

Another red pear shipped into Mexico is the Red Anjou. "Last year, we exported approximately 20,000 boxes to Mexico and expect we can double that volume this year. The pear is available through early March, and we will promote it along with the Green Anjou for the holidays. The February Valentine's period will provide another opportunity to promote the Red Anjou."

In Asian countries, the red pears provide the greatest export opportunities, according to Correa. "We can provide a variety of different red-colored pears to a region where the color red has such significance. For example, the Asians like to use them in prayer offerings. In newer or recovering markets, such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam, red pears will be our strength."

Steensma at Honey Bear Tree Fruit sees a lot of potential in pear exports as disposable incomes grow in the export markets. "South America, Asia and India are markets we feel can provide good opportunities for us in the future. The Red Anjou is a nice export pear and we are experimenting with the Taylor's Gold variety."

The Taylor's Gold pear is a newer variety

grown in the United States, originally coming from New Zealand. It has a russet looking skin, with a delicate aroma and rich flavor. It is exceptionally juicy and eats well fresh, but also is good for baking.

"The new Concorde pear variety, with its shape and unique flavor, has potential for export markets. Our main pear markets are Canada and Mexico, but there are windows of opportunity in the Southern Hemisphere," says CMI's Buak.

Shaped much like a Bosc pear, the Concorde is tender, sweet, creamy and flavorful. Its skin is gold-green in color with a slight pink blush. The pear has a crisp texture and retains its shape when cooked. It is slow to brown and is good for salads and desserts. "Its excellent taste is what is so distinctive," says McDougall of McDougall & Sons.

Cohen of Produce reports his firm has seen a steady yearly growth of Green Anjou pear exports during the short September to November season.



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Illinois Exports

Kim Hamilton, international marketing representative for the Illinois Department of Agriculture in Springfield, Illinois, talks about exports from her state.

by Jodean Robbins

The Illinois Department of Agriculture has an active and effective international promotion program. It coordinates numerous activities with the objective of heightening the awareness of Illinois food products and helping find new markets for the state's products overseas.

AMERICAN FOOD AND AG EXPORTER interviewed the Illinois Department of Agriculture's international marketing representative, Kim Hamilton, to find out more about its international focus.

Exporter: *What are the general activities the Department is responsible for in the international arena?*

Hamilton: We recruit Illinois food and agribusiness companies to participate in major trade shows worldwide. We sponsor an Illinois Pavilion providing companies a cost-effective way to participate in major promotional events and paying up to 50 percent of the booth cost.

We also provide companies with direct contact to buyers from around the globe by coordinating and sponsoring Buyers' Missions of International visitors and food/agribusiness buying teams hosted by the Department. Our staff arranges one-on-one meetings between international buyers and Illinois companies, which allow companies the opportunity to build relationships and learn about their products' potential without traveling overseas. We do industry-specific tours such as the Illinois Pork Tour, Illinois Beef Tour, Illinois Grain Tour, and the Illinois Dairy Tour, which are hosted numerous times throughout the year by the Department.

Looking outside the United States for opportunities, we host and arrange trade missions to foreign countries to help Illinois companies meet prospective international clients. Our companies can use these missions to negotiate product distribution, joint ventures, or other business possibilities.

Our Trade Leads service receives trade leads from foreign buyers, state, regional, and federal trade offices and then connects buyers looking for specific products with Illinois suppliers. The leads are disseminated electronically through the agency's database. Additionally we sponsor Informational Seminars in cooperation with trade asso-

ciations to assist Illinois companies in learning basic exporting, market trends and opportunities.

Exporter: *What are the major marketing projects are you working on currently?*

Hamilton: Currently, we are very focused on some international trade shows and are getting ready to recruit for the following shows: Foodex, U.S. Food Export Showcase at the Global Food and Style Show, IFE Americas Food and Beverage, National Restaurant Association, Food Marketing Institute, International Dairy Deli and Bakery Association, Institute of Food Technologists (IFT), SIAL China, Canadian Food and Beverage, and SIAL Montreal.

We're also working on some industry tours, specifically our Illinois Grain Tour where over 40 buyers come from all over the world to see what the Illinois grain industry has to offer. Additionally, our buyers' missions include 11 buyers from 11 different countries who will meet one-on-one with 22 suppliers of bakery ingredients, then the buyers will travel to Orlando, Florida, to attend the International Bakery Ingredient (IBIE) Show and meet one-on-one with ingredient suppliers who are attending or exhibiting at the show.

We also have our U.S. Livestock Genetic Export Inc. (USLGE) Swine Livestock Mission to Vietnam and China and a USLGE Swine Mission from Costa Rica coming to Illinois.

Exporter: *What are the principal products you're trying to promote right now?*

Hamilton: Right now we're focused on processed food and agribusiness products.

Exporter: *What are some of the other major products you've marketed in the past with success?*

Hamilton: We've had good success with snack products, confectionery, meat products, ingredients, grains, livestock, agriculture equipment, feed and feed ingredients, breakfast foods, beverages, dairy products, frozen foods, bakery products, and ethnic foods. We also promote eggs in cooperation with American Egg Board.

Exporter: What are some of the activities/countries you're targeting in the future?

Hamilton: Our focus is the Western Hemisphere and Asia Pacific. Future activities include a Midwest Buyers' Mission, a Northern Mexico Trade Mission, a Foodservice Trade Mission to Miami and the Dominican Republic, a Branded Program Workshop, a Buyers' Mission with consolidators, Illinois Pork and Grain Tours, and participation in the VIV Asia Show, the International Poultry-Feed Expo in Atlanta, and Livestock Asia in Malaysia.

Exporter: What are some of the other innovative services your companies can receive, especially with respect to technology?

Hamilton: Through our membership in the Food Export Association of the Mid-West (formerly MIATCO), we are able to offer our companies access to several interesting tools including Export Essentials Online which is a cost-effective service companies can complete at their own pace. It explains the complex steps of exporting and how to integrate all the elements. There are ten Modules guiding companies in determining export readiness, research, targeting top markets and creating an export strategy. Additionally, the *U.S. Foodlink—New Products Feature* is a bi-monthly international newsletter including a new products section highlighting U.S. suppliers' products. This helps increase awareness of products and generates sales leads from buyers around the world. The Food Export Helpline is a free service with customized export assistance, provided by a food export counselor. There are no canned answers, only insightful customized advice. Lastly, the Market Builder is a cost-

effective two tier service comprised of a market scan and rep finder. It is a customized way to discover a product's potential in the market, identify competitors, reach potential importers, and find out vital import requirements in target markets. It assists in research and identification of potential markets as well as connecting suppliers with international representatives. It also arranges meetings with importers/distributors who are well-qualified to handle the products.

Exporter: What other services with direct implementation overseas do you offer?

Hamilton: Again, through our association with the Food Export Association of the Mid-West, our companies have access to Food Show Plus, a cost-effective trade show enhancement service providing technical and logistical assistance. Interpreters are provided during the show hours, we provide translation of up to two pages of the company's marketing materials, they do a competitive products survey, and pre-qualified buyers are invited to the booth with a background check for top leads. Their Branded Program helps the company, products, and brand gain exposure in countries around the globe in a very economical way. They assist in international marketing efforts by reimbursing 50 percent of approved marketing and promotional expenses for qualified participants. Additionally, through In-Store Promotions, U.S. product promotions are held at international supermarkets, restaurants, and hotels featuring U.S.-made processed foods and agricultural products.

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Top 10 Almond Export Uses

Photo Courtesy of Almond Board of California



Going beyond traditional uses, other newer and more inventive uses are arising as consumer demand for almonds increases.

by Jodean Robbins



Photo Courtesy of Almond Board of California

Almond exports continue to grow each year. According to the United States Department of Agriculture USDA, “at the start of the 2007/08, exports to major European markets were well ahead of last August, with shipments to Spain more than double what they were last season.”

The information, printed in the 2007 *USDA-Economic Research Service’s Fruit and Tree Nuts Outlook* report, adds, “Eastern European demand also started off the new season strong, with August 2007 exports to Russia running almost 4.5 times ahead of August 2006. Similarly, shipments to the Middle East, especially the United Arab Emirate, a major export market for U.S. almonds, as well as Asia, predominantly India and Japan, have also started the new season strong.”

What is the reason for this continued growth? According to Dale Darling, sales manager for Blue Diamond Growers in Sacramento, California, almond growth is attributed to taste, versatility, health and nutritional benefits, among other reasons.

“We export to over 90 countries, and since

California produces over 80 percent of the world’s almonds, exports are a big part of the business,” says Darling. “Our major export markets are Spain, Germany, Japan, India, and the Netherlands. Each region has different uses for the almonds.”

Some of the more common uses for almonds around the world are steeped in tradition. Other newer and more inventive uses are arising as consumer demand for almonds increases. “We have seen usage expanding as the health message gets out,” says Jim Zion, managing director of Meridian Nut Growers, LLC, in Clovis, California. “More consumers are looking for products with almonds in them.”

The versatility of almonds is what gives these nuts such broad favorability around the world. The following is a list of many of the ways various regions use almonds:

1. Baking

One very popular use of almonds is in baked goods. “The French are famous for their almond pastries such as Macarons and the traditional Galette des Rois, a puff

pastry filled with almond cream,” reports Kristi Mika Saitama, associate director, Asia-Pacific/Russia, for the Almond Board of California in Modesto, California.

Paul Ewing with Hilltop Ranch, Inc. in Ballico, California, adds, “While almonds are traditionally used in bakery applications in Europe and North America, the use of almonds in bakery applications is spreading throughout Asia, particularly China, and other markets as French patisserie spreads in popularity and consumer incomes rise.”

Almonds can be ground into flour, a popular use in several countries for baking. In Greece, ground almonds are used as the base material in a variety of desserts. “In Asia, almond flour is used to make cakes and cookies,” reports Zion.

2. Marzipan

In Europe, almonds are a key component of the traditional marzipan. “It is a sweet confection consisting primarily of sugar and ground almonds,” explains Saitama of the Almond Board. Marzipan is both used as a sweet filling in chocolates or breads, as well

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as molded into small figures such as animals and flowers. Marzipan can also be used as icing for wedding and Christmas cakes.”

“Marzipan use is interesting,” says Zion of Meridian Nut Growers. “The Spanish and German importers principally import almonds, make marzipan, then sell the finished product into Germany and other markets. It’s an amazing tool almost like edible clay. Just about every European country has a use for marzipan.”

“The vast majority of the production and consumption of marzipan is in Europe,” states Ewing of Hilltop Ranch. “It is used both as an ingredient in confectionery and bakery applications and is consumed most heavily for the Christmas season.”

3. Candy/Confectionary

Throughout the world, almonds are used in various types of candies. In Italy, sugar-coated “Jordan” almonds are used for special occasions. According to Saitama, “Romans showered newlyweds with almonds as a fertility charm and gave sugared almonds as gifts to great men at public and private events in classical times. Today, a wedding favor of five Jordan almonds is said to symbolize five qualities of a happy marriage: health, wealth, happiness, fertility and longevity.”

Japan has a wide array of mouth-watering sweets to satisfy any discriminating almond-chocoholic. “Two long-time favorites among Japanese treats are delicate oval balls of almonds coated in chocolate and pretzel sticks dipped in milk, dark or white chocolate and coated with diced almonds,” states Saitama.

“Almonds are used in chocolate world-wide, including Latin America, Japan, Southeast Asia, North America, and Europe,” says Ewing. “Nougat or Turrón is another very popular application. This has been around for over 500 years. It’s most popular in Spain but also in Italy, southern France, and is now even produced in Canada, South Africa, Australia and other parts of the world.”

Almonds are a key ingredient in traditional Indian sweets known as Mithai. Saitama reports, “These are different kinds of milk, sugar and flour-based confectionery items in a variety of colors, shapes and sizes. Indian mithai are often eaten after meals as dessert. Popular Indian mithai, using almonds as a main ingredient, have special significance in Indian culture and are often presented during weddings and Deepavali (diwali) as

something symbolic.”

4. Holiday Foods

Almond use in desserts many times is part of culinary traditions. “Almonds can play a part in many Christmas traditions,” says Saitama. “In Sweden, I’ve heard tell of an almond hidden in rice pudding being a symbol of good fortune. The person who finds the almond is said to get married in the coming year.”

Additionally, many holiday cookies and cakes count almonds as key component. “Almonds are used as a topping on baked goods for a lot of Christmas confectionary in various European countries,” states Zion.

5. Cooking/Cuisine:

Almonds are an essential ingredient in Mediterranean cuisine overall. “Ancient Greek medical texts are among the oldest and most extensive to discuss the use of almonds,” states Saitama. “Today, the delicate, subtle flavor of almonds adds gourmet richness, a tasty, satisfying crunch, and aesthetic appeal to global cuisine, whether Mediterranean, Asian or Latin American.”

Almonds are increasingly used as a salad topping. “Sliced almonds are becoming more and more popular as a topping for salads in North America and now other markets,” says Saitama.

“Many Asian countries use almonds to add flavors to some of their dishes, although you never see the whole almond,” explains Zion. “You may see some flakes of almond but mostly the dishes will just have the almond flavor.”

6. Snacks

Almonds are a classic snack food found in many different snack applications. “In China, shelled and in-shell almonds are typically consumed during the fall and winter as a roasted, salted, snack, with sales at their peak during the Chinese New Year festive season,” explains Saitama. “Chinese consumers enjoy cracking the soft, outer shell of almonds with their hands and popping the kernel into their mouths. It’s a great way to socialize with friends and family.”

For consumers in Taiwan, slivered almonds are common. “Slivered almonds with dried sardines are a popular, high-calcium snack, and they are sometimes mixed with rice crackers,” says Saitama. “Consumers in Taiwan also enjoy wasabi-coated slivered almonds.”

Almonds can also be an economic choice

for mixed nut snacks. “When almond prices are lower compared to other snack nuts, the amount of almonds used in mixed nuts can increase significantly,” states Ewing.

7. Cereal/Breakfast

Almonds are increasingly becoming an important component of cereals. “North America and parts of Europe, including the U.K. and Germany, are the major cereal ingredient markets,” says Ewing. “However, this is expanding as cereals become more popular in other parts of the world such as Latin America.”

“Europeans are famous for using granola for breakfast, and almonds are used in a lot of granola,” reports Zion. “They will also mix almonds with fresh fruit and eat it for breakfast.”

8. Almond Butter

A smaller volume but innovative use of almonds is in the making of almond butter. “This is primarily consumed in North America and some parts of Europe,” explains Ewing. “Almond butter manufacturers prefer the Mission variety for its stronger flavor.”

Almond butter is popular with peanut allergy sufferers as an alternative to peanut butter and is also liked by some consumers because of its less salty taste.

9. Almond Oil

Almond oil has traditionally been used in massage therapy and is considered to be an effective emollient. Ewing reports, “Almond oil is used for cosmetics and other uses in Europe, North America, and other countries as well.”

“Almond oil is used a lot in France and in the Asian markets,” says Zion.

10. Ice Cream

Almonds provide both flavor and texture for ice cream. “Primarily diced almonds, as well as slivered, are used by ice cream manufacturers world-wide,” says Ewing.

“In Italy, the almond gelato is wonderful,” says Zion. “They use the almond to flavor it and then put crunches of almond on top of the gelato.”



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AMERICAN FOOD AND AG EXPORTER
RAPID RESPONSE CARD
All information must be provided for processing

Job Title (check one)
 President/Owner/General Manager
 Vice President
 General Product Division Director
 Purchasing Director/Manager
 Director of Marketing
 Buyer
 Manufacturer
 Export Sales
 Procurement/Purchase Manager

Type of Business (check one)
 Distributor
 Manufacturer
 Importer
 Wholesaler
 Retailer
 Independent Supplier
 Other

Product Lines Carried (circle all that apply)
 A. Beef, Swine, Poultry
 B. Beverages, Non-alcoholic
 C. Candy
 D. Cereal/Foods
 E. Cotton
 F. Dairy Products
 G. Dried/Dehydrated Products
 H. Eggs and Shell Eggs
 I. Fish and Seafood
 J. Flour
 K. Fruits and Vegetables
 L. Grains
 M. Meat and Poultry
 N. Nuts
 O. Oil and Fat
 P. Other
 Q. Spices and Seasonings
 R. Sugar
 S. Tanned/Preserved Fruits
 T. Tobacco
 U. Wine
 V. Soy Beans/Soy Products
 W. Other
 X. Other
 Y. Other
 Z. Other

Circle the numbers that correspond to the products and services you want to receive information on.

Circle Number From Advertisements
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- Mr. Kiyotada Nagasaki, *President, Spark*

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- Mr. Keisaku Ichinose, *Meat Buyer, UNY*

(UNY is the fourth largest national retailer in Japan.)



For more information, contact the U.S. Meat Export Federation at 1-303-623-6328; Fax 1-303-623-0297. Or visit www.usmef.org.
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