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American Dessert Festival in Vladivostok

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CSSF Activity Report

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Report Highlights:

ATO Vladivostok organized an American Dessert Festival held January 28 to February 4, 2010 at a local coffee house. Several USDA Cooperators participated in the promotion, including Pear Bureau Northwest, California Prune Board, and the Almond Board of California. One of the highlights of the festival was a competition for culinary students, which was designed to inspire up-and-coming chefs to become accustomed to using American ingredients. The event drew local mass media coverage, and the office posted a highlight video on YouTube.

General Information:

ATO Vladivostok organized an American Dessert Festival held January 28 to February 4, 2010 at the Oaxaca (pronounced O-ha-ka) coffee house in Vladivostok. Several USDA Cooperators participated in the promotion, including Pear Bureau Northwest, California Prune Board, and the Almond Board of California. One of the highlights of the festival was a competition for culinary students, which was designed to inspire up-and-coming chefs to become familiar with using American ingredients.

Although several fruit and nut Cooperators are working actively in the Russian Far East (RFE), Cooperator representatives look to the ATO for leadership in planning and organizing joint activities. While the American Dessert Festival helped make Vladivostok's cold and windy winter feel a little toastier and sweeter, the organizers had some more profound objectives:

- Increase awareness of high quality American products used as ingredients in desserts, including: almonds, pears, prunes, and pecans.
- Increase consumer loyalty towards the mentioned products;
- Attract more visitors to a cafe loyal to using American ingredients;
- Increase consumption of U.S. food ingredients;
- Draw attention to healthy properties of the products used in desserts;
- Present recipes and ideas for cooking with U.S. ingredients at home; and
- Engage with professors and students of Institute of Food Technologies and Commodity Sciences and encourage use of U.S. food ingredients in academic activity.

In order to meet the mentioned objectives, ATO staff proposed the joint activity to USDA Cooperators with a written proposal. After securing "buy-in" from the Cooperators and Oaxaca's management, the next task was obtaining CSSF funding to cover the ATO's role as the "general contractor" of the Festival. With participants lined up and funding secure, the Festival went from concept to reality. Benefits to participants include:

- A special menu which included desserts featuring California almonds and prunes, NW pears, and pecans.
- Almonds and pear samples were given to visitors who ordered desserts made of almonds or pears;
- Recipes of desserts containing almonds, pears, and prunes ingredients were displayed and distributed;
- Video about NW pears and California almonds were displayed on nearby flat screen TV;
- Master classes demonstrating healthy and easy dessert options to make at home with American ingredients;
- An opportunity for students from the Institute of Food Technologies and Commodity Sciences of Pacific State Economic University to showcase their talents and become familiar with American ingredients.

The target audience of the Festival included the media, culinary students, and Oaxaca's middle- to upper-class customers, who typically include young working couples, working women and housewives aged 25-45; and health-conscious parents.

The opening ceremony of the Festival brought together cafe management and staff, culinary students and faculty, Oaxaca's regular customers, and numerous staff members from the U.S. Consulate. Consul General Tom Armbruster made opening remarks and Oaxaca owner, Tatyana Dyachenko, spoke to the group as well. She spoke with passion and admiration for the quality and selection of U.S. products and attendees were inspired by the menu and interesting ideas.



Oaxaca owner, Tatyana Dyachenko tells why she uses U.S. food ingredients in her cafe – superior quality and taste



CG Tom Armbruster greets the guests

Besides the special menu items prepared by the Oaxaca coffee house, the Festival guests marveled at the creativity and presentation of the desserts created by students of the Institute of Food Technology and Commodities. The students underwent a very tough competition, but were rewarded by generous applause from the audience, as well as special certificates of accomplishment.



Desserts prepared by OAXACA chef and students for tasting at opening ceremony

On February 2, the Deputy Chief of Mission, Eric Rubin, from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow met with Festival organizers, U.S. fruit importers, and California almond and pecan distributors at the Oaxaca coffee house. He praised the organizers of the Festival for the creative outreach activity and for reaching their goal of increasing awareness of high quality U.S. food products and drawing attention to their health benefits.

Mass media coverage was organized in cooperation with the U.S. Consulate's Public Affairs Section. The opening ceremony was attended by 14 mass media representatives including TV channels, newspapers, on-line editions and lifestyle magazines, which equates to media market saturation. In addition, a press release was circulated announcing the forthcoming festival. Online coverage continues well after the event with various outlets posting video and text on their websites including the popular local weather forecast site which is visited daily by approximately 10,000 people in the RFE.



Culinary students with Professor & CG



Mass media turnout at the opening ceremony

A video devoted to highlights from the Festival was posted on YouTube in order to use new media to reach a broader audience. The video also helps U.S.-based Cooperator representatives visualize the activity and its benefits. The ATO will use the YouTube video as a "recruitment tool" to organize additional joint activities with Cooperators in other cities. Follow this link to view the video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qnh19YBt2Mw>.

