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Report Highlights:

Information technology continues to change shape as a promotional tool with beer bloggers and cyber net-equipped fast food chains receiving media attention. The importance of eating a good breakfast is once again in the headlines. This dovetails nicely with ATO Japan's "V5" vegetables for breakfast theme.

Includes PSD Changes: No
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Editor's Notes

We are happy to inform you that we continue to receive new subscription requests, which is a good feeling. We hope we can continue to bring you informative and fun news about Japanese food trends.

We know that some of you who have established business in Japan have been back and forth with your Japanese counterparts about price issues. Food price issues are affecting everybody and the realization that the Japanese are not immune to price increases is settling in. However, this is not the only news about the food industry. Innovation and change are still keywords for success and tools such as information technology are providing some of the answers.

Food and Information Technology

Blog Scout Website

<http://www.blogscout.jp/index.html>

This website is only in Japanese, but just like the name suggests it is a website for organizations to scout popular bloggers who are the most effective in communicating specific messages.

Major Beer Makers Tap On Bloggers To Brew and Communicate Messages

Nikkei MJ, May 23, 2008 p19



Major beer manufacturers are having taste sessions with a different crowd. Influential bloggers are sought out to attend beer tastings. Kirin Beer invited 17 bloggers along with the media to attend a tasting that was held on May 22 and Sapporo Beer planned a tasting at the factory for 20 bloggers. The purpose is to expose bloggers to their products and manufacturing process so they can in turn communicate their experience and knowledge to their blogshippers.



It is not only the beer companies that are tapping into bloggers. Whiskey maker Suntory has already had nine successful seminars with bloggers already at their factory and will take their show on the road to a bar in Ginza.

Food and blogs are still a rare combination compared to cosmetics and the movie industry, but they have been successful tools to communicate product information, manufacturing processes and taste experiences to a broad bloggership. FAS Japan and cooperators have been using a blogger of our own to promote www.myfood.jp.

The Importance Is Quality Time, not Eating

Nihon Keizai Shimbun, May 9, 2008 p31

According to the article, "Customers are changing the way they utilize and perceive fast food restaurants." Fast food restaurants continue to strive to serve customers efficiently, but now they also want to provide comfort and extra-services to keep their customers in their restaurants as long as possible.

2,700 out of 3,746 McDonalds Japan restaurants, 114 out of 1,141 KFC Japan restaurants and other fast food restaurants now provide internet connections, electrical outlets, discounted drinks, and an ambiance for many, but



mostly for business people to spend time surfing the net and writing emails. Students and homemakers are attracted by new and better dessert menus. Lotteria (Japanese hamburger chain restaurant) has seen a 3-4% increase of customer traffic between 2:00 pm and 6:00 pm on weekdays when homemakers and students take a break while enjoying desserts and coffee.

Healthy Eating

In the February 2008 issue of JFT, we introduced the Government of Japan's promotional push to increase breakfast eaters through its Food Education program. Seeing the amount of the media coverage and educational material published recently, we thought it would be interesting to introduce you to two articles regarding breakfast.

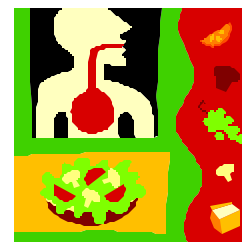
The Breakfast Review Nihon Keizai Shimbun (Nikkei Plus 1), May 10, 2008, p19

If you are the type that jogs or stretches in the morning you'll understand this description for breakfast. Very simply, "(B)reakfast is the warming up part of the day". According to Dr. Suzuki of Waseda University Sports Science Department, breakfast prepares our mental and physical state to function properly for the rest of the day. Furthermore, breakfast helps our body warm-up in the morning after our body temperature declined during our sleep.

Why Mom Took Breakfast Seriously Nihon Keizai Shimbun, May 17, 2008, p15

One of Japan's well-known celebrity teachers has promoted "Early bedtime, early rise and breakfast" for a healthy lifestyle as a basic educational program for children. His research showed that children who slept more and ate breakfast scored higher on exams. The url to his research results (English) is

<http://kageyamahideo.com/method/KageyamaMethod.pdf>



Interesting to note is that his recent finding showed declining grades for children who skipped breakfast on a regular basis.

How Much Is Too Much Labeling? Nihon Keizai Shimbun, March 22, 2008, p15

I found an article that brings to light another indication of Japan's excessive safety fears. You've heard of ingredient labels and cautionary labels. Well there are cautionary labels in Japan that seem to go too far and consumers sent in their comments on some. The infamous Cup Noodle has a lot of writing and diagrams on its top. One diagram shows liquid spilling from the cup with a caption cautioning consumers to beware of hot water. Consumer's comment: "If you use hot water you ought to know to be careful of hot water. Does a person need to be told?" Another woman commented on a yogurt product label that asks the purchaser to beware that contents might splatter out of cup. She was amused that people need to be told. Well, we all know that part of the issue is product liability, but this is another example where consumers should probably be given more credit.