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Mexico

Kosher Foods

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Report Highlights:

The Mexican Market for kosher food is an important market for U.S. kosher producers. It is important to emphasize the fact that the kosher market in Mexico is estimated to be approximately 4 million consumers.

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THE MEXICAN MARKET FOR KOSHER FOODS

I. Market Overview

The Jewish community in Mexico is divided into two major groups by geographic origin, one of Sephardic origin, mainly from Turkey, Lebanon and Syria and the other of Ashkenazi origin, mainly from Poland and Russia.

Kosher products include domestic and imported products. Both can be found in special kosher sections of some major supermarket chains and also in specialty food stores. In Mexico City, major retailers, such as Superama, Wal-Mart, and Gigante, have kosher food sections in neighborhoods where the Jewish population is more concentrated.

The main consumers of kosher food are Orthodox Jews who follow strict kosher laws. However, most of the Jewish community that is not Orthodox eats kosher products as well.

In addition to the Jewish community, other consumers purchase kosher products because they believe these products provide an additional level of food safety. Some consumers with special dietary needs, such as lactose intolerants and vegetarians, look for kosher parve foods, at these products contain no meat or dairy ingredient. In addition, there is interest in kosher food among members of Mexico's Muslim and Seventh Day Adventist communities because of similarities in their dietary restrictions.

While most imported kosher grocery products are sourced from the United States, certain items are also imported from other countries, such as canned fish and seafood, wines, olives and olive oil, which come from Spain. Other imports include marmalades from France, canned fruit from Greece, and cookies, confectionary products and chocolates from other European countries.

The following table indicates some advantages and disadvantages for exporters of U.S. kosher food products to Mexico.

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Kosher products from the United States are considered to be of high-quality.	Some kosher consumers have a preference for locally produced kosher products.
NAFTA has given the United States a competitive advantage in that most U.S. food products enter duty-free.	Many of the benefits of kosher foods are unknown to Mexican consumers.
Transportation costs are low compared to products coming from other countries.	

II. Retail and Institutional Sales

Supermarkets in predominantly Jewish neighborhoods tend to have a kosher section for meat, poultry, dairy products and some processed foods. Some of the larger supermarket chains (e.g. Gigante, WalMart, and Superama) maintain one or more kosher supervisors that

work with Jewish committees¹ to select and certify those products as kosher. For example, they may have a kosher supervisor for meat, bakery and dairy products. These large stores also service hotels, restaurants, and catering companies that serve the Jewish community for religious holidays and celebrations. Kosher specialty stores also work closely with the Jewish committees.

A significant percentage of kosher products are imported from the United States. In a specialty store, imports from the United States can be as high as 45 percent of all products. Imported food items include a variety of processed products: cereals, marmalades, pasta, canned vegetables, condiments, frozen meals, snack foods, candy, meat, teas and juices. U.S. brand names that can be found in the Mexican market include: Florida Natural, Seneca Sweet, Arden, Borden, Duncan Hines, Vita, Natures Path, Hodgson Mill, Roland, Heinz, Badia, Smucker's, Dickinson's, and Hershey's among others. Importers work with Jewish committees to supply the products needed by the community. The kosher products are labeled as kosher and may include the name of the Jewish committee that approved the product. The local rabbinate can greatly influence the purchasing preferences of local communities.

More than 65 kosher caterers operate in Mexico City. They normally purchase products from the kosher distributors and importers. Exporters of U.S. kosher food products may contact the U.S. Agricultural Trade Office (ATO) in Mexico City for a complete list of caterers and distributors; please see the table below for ATO contact information. While many individuals in the Jewish community do not strictly observe kosher laws year-round, they do expect kosher products to be served during Jewish religious holidays and celebrations such as bar mitzvahs and weddings. In fact, kosher caterers and hotels are busy both seasonally as well as throughout the year, as consumption of kosher food within the Jewish community is relatively high.

III. Domestic Production

Around 90 percent of the available fresh kosher products--such as meat and poultry--are produced in Mexico. Likewise, over 50 percent of canned and frozen products are produced locally. Two kashrut committees are authorized to provide kosher certification for products in Mexico. They work closely with manufacturers of all types of consumer-ready products to ensure that their products meet the strict standards mandated by Jewish dietary law, thereby enabling them to be sold as kosher certified products. For meat production, kosher certifying organizations have arranged with Mexican slaughterhouses to perform kosher slaughter in a separate area of the slaughterhouse, under the supervision of a rabbi.

Strict inspections are performed by the kashrut committees in every manufacturing facility in order to be able to certify the products as kosher. Among the accepted kosher certifications in Mexico are logos of the major U.S. kosher supervisory agencies, including OU, OK, Star-K, Kof-K, Star-D, KAJ and others.

¹ The Jewish committees provide kosher certification for food products marketed as kosher in Mexico to ensure that such products meet the strict standards mandated by Jewish dietary law. These committees are comprised of respected rabbis of the community with whom the retail store works.

IV. Promotion

Mexican companies and suppliers are interested in purchasing more U.S. kosher products. Companies have expressed particular interest in processed foods, oils, and organic products. There is interest in raw materials, stabilizers, sweeteners, acids and arabic gum. There is also a need for additional kosher meat, including chicken and beef.

The marketing of kosher food products is a two-step process: the first step is to obtain kosher certification, and the second step is to reach the kosher consumer. The kosher consumer is normally brand-loyal, interested in quality, and well-read. Consequently, most kosher consumers are targeted through print media with kosher product news and advertisements. These consumers are also targeted through the Internet via websites that provide the Jewish community with information about available kosher products.

Many leading food manufacturers use kosher certification symbols to better position their products in the market. Some food retailers in large Jewish communities give priority to kosher certified brands when allocating critical shelf space.

The best way to promote kosher products in Mexico is through religious organizations and specialty distributors and caterers. As noted, advertising in Jewish newspapers is one of the highly recommended and most common promotional tools. There are currently around 10 to 12 Jewish publications, including newspapers and magazines in Mexico City. Each community has its own publication and all of them have kosher food sections. See the list of major Jewish communities in Mexico at the end of this report for more information on their publications.

In addition, many Mexican supermarkets, such as Wal-Mart, Superama, Gigante, and Comercial Mexicana in Mexico City, as well as other large retail chains in northern Mexico, such as Soriana and Casa Ley, have kosher food sections that would be ideal for promotional activities. Exporters of U.S. kosher food products may contact the ATO Mexico City for a list of buyers for these retail chains.

V. Import requirements

Kosher food products are subject to the same import requirements as non-kosher products. Importers and distributors of kosher products report that in general they do not encounter any difficulties with the Mexican government when importing U.S. products.

Please see GAIN Report MX1205 for an overview of rules and regulations for exporting food products to Mexico. Also see GAIN Report MX1223 for information about retail labeling regulations. Please note that although the kosher seal is not a label requirement under the Mexican regulations, it is recommended to be included on the Spanish translated label to enable buyers to identify products as kosher.

Contacts List

Organization	Contact	Address	Telephone/Fax
U.S. GOVERNMENT			
U.S. Agricultural Trade Office	Christine Sloop Director	Liverpool #31 Col. Juarez 06600 México, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55) 5140-2600 Fax: (011-52-55) 5535-8357
IMPORTERS/ CATERERS/COMMUNITIES			
Organization	Contact	Address	Telephone/Fax
KDM Contact: Rabbi Nissim Hilu Email: rabbihilu@prodigy.net.mx	Kosher Rabbinic Consultant/ Importer	Carlos Echanove No. 224 Col. Vista Hermosa 05100 México, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55) 5814-0600 Ext. 3041 Fax: (011-52-55) 5814-0611
TENDENCIA GASTRONOMICA Contact: Rossy Cherem Email: ventas@tendenciagastronomica.com	Importer	Av. 1o. de mayo 226-Bis, Col. San Andres Atoto Naucalpan, Edo. De México 53500	Tel: (011-52-55) 2122-7100 Ext. 317 or 336 Fax: (011-52-55) 5576-1034
MEXIDELI, SA de CV Contact: Yory Salant Email: ysalant@mexitec.com.mx Contact: Haggai Blich Email: hblich@mexitec.com.mx	Importer	Tamaulipas 150- Piso 20 Col. Condesa 06140 México, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55) 5211-2200 Fax: (011-52-55) 5212-0026
Quality Judaica Kasher, SA de CV Contact: Menahem Benzaquen Email: menahemkosher@prodigy.net.mx	Importer	Emilio Castelar No. 185 Col. Polanco 11560 México, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55) 5281-4185 Fax: (011-52-55) 5282-2567
Comercializadora Yarden Contact: Abraham Kurson administrador@kursonkosher.com	Importer	Vainilla No. 234 Col. Granjas Mexico 08400 México, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55) 5657-0191/ 5657-0122 Fax: (011-52-55) 5657-1656

Banquetes Exclusivos Contact: Simon Atri banquetesa@aol.com	Caterer	Carlos Echanove No. 224 Col. Lomas de Vistahermosa 05000 Mexico, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55) 5570-9646 Fax: (011-52-55) 5292-2270
Elvio Frydman Email: fiestasfrydmancompras@yahoo.com.mx	Caterer	Fuente de la Huerta No. 22 Col. Tecamachalco 53950 Estado de México	Tel: (011-52-55) 5596-0339 Fax: (011-52-55) 5596-0353
Koshertel Sr. Alberto Tawil Email: biwil26@yahoo.com	Distributor	Bernard Shaw No. 44 Col. Polanco 11540 México, DF	Tel: (011-52-55) 5280-2753 Fax: (011-52-55) 5082-6550
Super Emet Simon Kassin simonkaza@yahoo.com.mx	Distributor	Homero No. 1212 Col. Los Morales Polanco 11510 México, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55) 5255-3850, 5255-3800 Fax: (011-52-55) 5254-5846
Consejo Comunitario Ashkenazi ashkenaz@prodigy.net.mx	Social Institution	Acapulco. 70-6To. Piso , Col. Roma Norte, México, D.F	Tel: (011-52-55) 5211-0575/ 5211-0501 Fax: (011-52-55) 5211-2839
Monte Sinai	Community (has publications)	Fuente de San Sulsticio 16 Col. Tecamachalco 53950 Naucalpan, Edo. de Mexico	Tel: (011-52-55) 5294-8617 Fax: (011-52-55) 5294-8617