

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: October 03, 2024

Report Number: HK2024-0053

Report Name: The Hong Kong Wonton - Volume 4 Issue 13

Country: Hong Kong

Post: Hong Kong

Report Category: Agriculture in the News, Food Service - Hotel Restaurant Institutional, Retail Foods, Market Promotion/Competition

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Report Highlights:

Bite size local news, Post reports and activity summaries wrapped by ATO Hong Kong. In this issue: ATO Hong Kong teams up with Hong Kong Polytechnic University to train student chefs and showcase U.S. ingredients; Cotton Council International brings Cotton USA Sustainability and Transparency Seminar to Hong Kong; the Centre for Food Safety cracks down on illegal cross-border trade in regulated foods; Muslim leaders push for government halal certification of eateries, and Hong Kong prepares for up to 150,000 attendees at annual Wine and Dine festival.

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wrapped by ATO Hong Kong

Sep. 16 – Sep. 27, 2024 | Vol. 4 Issue #13

ATO Hong Kong Brings U.S. Ingredients & Wine Workshop to Hong Kong Polytechnic University

On September 25, ATO Hong Kong organized an educational workshop highlighting U.S. ingredients and wine at the School of Hotel & Tourism Management (SHTM) at Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

The event was attended by U.S. Consul General, Gregory May, who welcomed the student chefs and received the SHTM school flag from the school's Dean. Twenty students participated in the program, which included preparing a three-course meal that incorporated U.S. lobster, eggs, cheese, and pistachios. Following the meal preparation, speakers from the U.S. Dairy Export Council, USA Poultry and Egg Export Council, Food Export Northeast, and American Pistachio Growers shared information about their respective products and industry. Adding to the experience, students were able to enjoy the meals they had prepared and participate in a U.S. wine tasting arranged by a local wine importer.

Following the successful event, both ATO Hong Kong and SHTM agreed to explore further collaborations to promote high-quality U.S. ingredients to the next generation of leaders in Hong Kong's hospitality industry.



ECONOMY



1.2 Million Mainland Chinese Visitors Expected In Hong Kong For National Day ‘Golden Week’ Break [[SCMP](#), Sep.22]

Hong Kong is expected to welcome 1.2 million mainland Chinese visitors during the coming National Day “golden week” holiday. The Travel Industry Council (TIC) also predicts the number of inbound tour groups may grow by 10 percent to 850 over the seven-day holiday. However, a catering industry representative said the sector might not benefit significantly because of an anticipated large outflow of residents. While TIC acknowledged that spending patterns were changing with visitors opting more for in-depth travel, the council believed that tourists are still very much willing to spend and buy if products are appealing. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong continues to seek way to lure travelers to the city for longer stays. Recent efforts include drone shows, festival discounts, and new transportation infrastructure.

Hong Kong Overtakes Singapore As Asia’s Top Financial Centre, Influential Ranking Shows [[SCMP](#), Sep.24]

Hong Kong has dethroned Singapore to become Asia’s top financial center for the first time in two years, according to the latest edition of the semi-annual Global Financial Centers Index release. Globally, Hong Kong ranked third behind New York and London, with Singapore and San Francisco rounding out the top five. Hong Kong’s scores were among the highest in various areas of competitiveness, including business environment, human capital, infrastructure and reputation, the report showed. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong’s rebound as Asia’s top financial center is a positive sign for continued growing demand for consumer-oriented food and beverage products, particularly if the rebound is accompanied by a larger influx of expats to the city.

Macau Households Shrinking Yet Spending Rises [[Macau Daily Times](#), Sep.23]

The Statistics and Census Service (DSEC)’s survey revealed that local households in Macau have been shrinking, with average sizes decreasing from 3.0 to 2.8 persons. The survey noted a 7 percent drop in bigger households, while both one-person and two-person households grew by over 25 percent. Despite this, household expenditures have risen, driven by increased costs for housing and food. **ATO Notes:** For Aug 2024, Macau’s inflation rate increased 0.74 percent, while costs for general household expenses, including food, increased by 1 percent.

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HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, AND INSTITUTIONS



Hong Kong's Muslim Community Urges Government Funding For Body Accrediting Halal Eateries [SCMP, Sep.25]

Hong Kong's Muslim community is urging the Hong Kong government (HKG) to fund an accreditation body for certifying halal restaurants to attract more Middle Eastern tourists. Lawmakers proposed Ramadan food fairs, increasing prayer rooms, and financial support in halal certification attainment. Hong Kong does not have an official government halal certification system, and the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund is the only unit that oversees halal certification. **ATO Notes:** Currently, Hong Kong has over 300,000 Muslim residents, and around 116 restaurant outlets with Halal Certification. Besides the prevailing challenges facing all restaurants (e.g. high rent, labor costs), Halal restaurants in the city also face challenges sourcing of high-end halal ingredients, which could present an opportunity for U.S. companies able to provide halal certification to their customers for premium U.S. beef, cheese and other ingredients.

Could Robot Chefs Be Answer to Staff Shortages? Hong Kong Team Believes It Has Recipe For Success [SCMP, Sep.16]

Traditional enterprises are encouraged by the Chinese government to transform with the help of technology. A Hong Kong professor, Chen Guan-hua developed a culinary robot to address chef shortages. His robot, which can cook dishes autonomously, has been sold in Japan and the United States. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong launched labor import scheme in September 2023 to deal with a severe labor shortage in construction, catering, and medical services. From April to June 2024, imported laborers approved to work in the retail industry, and the catering services were 1,035 and 5,917 respectively.

Hotel Industry Sees Significant Growth In 2023 [Macau Daily Times, Sep.17]

According to DSEC, Macau's hotel industry grew by 8 percent year-on-year in 2023, with the number of hotel establishments rising to 145. Hotel receipts surged 136 percent to \$4.7 billion, while expenditures rose 41 percent to \$3.7 billion, resulting in a positive return for many ventures. Receipts from room sales, food and beverage, and space rentals saw significant growth, with five-star hotels and economy accommodations both recording substantial gains. **ATO Notes:** In the first seven months of 2024, the occupancy rate of hotels in Macau held steady at the similar level of 2023. The average occupancy rate in July 2024 reached 88 percent. The Hengqin-Macao multiple-entry visa policy by China's National Immigration Administration (NIA) took effect in this May. The implementation of the visa expansion policy, intended for tour groups, aims to promote tourism between Macau and Hengqin in southern China.

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Oktoberfest Macau At MGM 2024 Taps the Keg In October [[Macau Daily Times, Sep.23](#)]

Supported by the Macau Government Tourism Office, MGM casino resort in Macau is going to host Oktoberfest Macau at MGM 2024 from October 25 to November 5 to enhance Macau's "Tourism+" initiative. This 12-day event celebrates Bavarian culture with authentic German beer, traditional food, booth games and live music performances. The event has previously attracted over 180,000 guests.

ATO Notes: Macau consumers have a growing interest in beer – demonstrated by a 16 percent year-on-year increase in global beer imports, which reached \$18.8 million in 2023. The United States is the fifth largest beer supplier to Macau, but opportunities exist to expand this market as tourists flock to the city.

RETAIL



Bakehouse Doubles Outlets, Adds 50 Percent Staff As Its Egg Tarts Beat Hong Kong's Retail Gloom [[SCMP, Sep.22](#)]

Bakehouse is investing millions of dollars to double its Hong Kong footprint to cater to the rising demand for its sourdough egg tarts, offering a rare piece of good news amid the city's retail and consumption slump. The outlook for the retail industry for the rest of the year is very pessimistic for both landlords and retailers. Between 600 and 650 street shops have been closed so far this year, more than the 400 to 450 new shops that opened in the period, thus driving vacancies higher, according to commercial property agent Midland IC&I. **ATO Notes:** Bakeries appear to be a bright spot in the otherwise challenging Hong Kong retail sector. While some retail outlets have shuttered locations or ceased operating, some smaller bakery chains are weathering the storm.

Hong Kong Wine And Dine Festival Expands To 5 Days, Ditches Plastic Cups [[SMCP, Sep.19](#)]

The Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival will expand to five days this year, running from October 23 to 27 at the Central Harbor front. Organized by the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), the event will feature over 300 booths offering food and drinks from various countries. The festival aims to be more eco-friendly by banning plastic cups and encouraging guests to bring their own wine glasses. Expected to attract 150 thousand attendees, the festival will also include wines from new regions, natural wines, Chinese baijiu, cocktails and a new whisky and gin zone. **ATO Notes:** The HKG continues to promote the city as a food paradise by bringing in more wine options from over the world, hoping to entice visitors to return to the city.

The 24th Macau Food Festival Will Launch in November [[The Macao News, Sep.16](#)]

The 24th Macau Food Festival will be held at Sai Van Lake Square from November 15 to December 1, coinciding with the 2024 Grand Prix. Organized by the United Association of Food and Beverage Merchants of Macao, the event will feature stalls offering local and international cuisine from mainland China, Asia and Europe. The festival aims to support small and medium-sized businesses and will

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include auxiliary events like a photography contest, booth design contest, and a traditional Chinese costumes competition. **ATO Notes:** ATO Hong Kong plans to visit the Macau Food Festival and prepare a GAIN report on opportunities for U.S. companies to participate in 2025. Since 2003, Macau Food Festival has been organized in conjunction with Macau Grand Prix. The unique approach aims to attract more tourists with car-racing and food tasting experience.



TRADE

CCI Explores Cotton Sustainability and Transparency Trends at Hong Kong Seminar



ATO Hong Kong joined Cotton Council International's COTTON USA Sustainability and Transparency Seminar at the Kowloon Shangri-la Hotel in Hong Kong on 19th September. Over 150 representatives from 33 global brands and sourcing offices, along with 27 U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol mill members gathered to discuss the global cotton market outlook, sustainability, circularity, and the regulatory environment in the EU and U.S. markets. The seminar offered a valuable educational opportunity for sourcing offices and Trust Protocol mill members to explore sustainability and

transparency in the cotton textile supply chain with industry leaders and experts.

Centre for Food Safety (CFS) Continues to Crack Down on Inbound Persons Illegally Bringing Regulated Food Into Hong Kong [[HKSAR Government Press Release, Sep.16](#)]

CFS is intensifying efforts to prevent the illegal import of regulated food into Hong Kong. From September 9 to 15, sixty-eight cases were detected. Offenders were found carrying raw meat and eggs without health certificates. The CFS collaborates with other enforcement agencies and has prosecuted over 1,400 individuals this year, doubling last year's figure. **ATO Notes:** As more Hong Kong residents head to the mainland for grocery shopping, the HKG has begun to implement more strict enforcement to prevent the transport of raw meat and eggs to Hong Kong. Many residents stopped at the border appeared to be unaware of local laws and were subject to fines. Hong Kong and mainland still have different legislation standards on food imports.

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Hong Kong To Seek More Information Before It Considers Easing Ban On Japanese Seafood Imports [SCMP, Sep.20]

Hong Kong authorities are considering easing restrictions on seafood imports from 10 Japanese prefectures, following China's decision to "gradually" lift its ban. The Environment and Ecology Bureau will seek information from Tokyo and Beijing to ensure food safety before relaxing measures. The ban has significantly impacted Hong Kong's dining industry, especially high-end Japanese restaurants. Recent tests showed no safety violations, and Japan is eager to resume exports. The Hong Kong government remains cautious, emphasizing the need for scientific evidence. **ATO Notes:** Japan is the second largest supplier of seafood products to Hong Kong. In the first six months of 2024, Hong Kong's import of seafood products from Japan dropped by 30 percent to \$177 million. Top Japanese seafood supplied to Hong Kong, includes scallops, sea cucumber, and fish.

Hong Kong Freshwater Fish Farms Log 30 Percent Drop In Business Amid Outbreak Of Deadly Infection [SCMP, Sep.18]

Hong Kong seafood suppliers have experienced a 30 percent drop in business due to fears of a bacterial infection linked to raw freshwater fish. The government was investigating the rise in Group B Streptococcus infections, which increased from 27 to 40 cases in a week. The infections have only affected consumers, not fishmongers. Vice-president of the Federation of Hong Kong Agricultural Associations, Kwok Chi-yau, noted that Hong Kong residents quickly changed their eating habits because of the news of the infections. The infection is suspected to have originated outside the city, with samples being collected from markets handling imported fish. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong's domestic seafood consumption rate is among the highest in the world. However, global imports dropped in the first six months of 2024 by 14 percent to \$1.5 billion. The United States is the ninth largest supplier of seafood products.

Highlight From The 86th Meeting of The Trade Consultation Forum by Centre for Food Safety (CFS)

HKG has been actively working with mainland authorities to promote the utilization of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao-Bridge for importation of fresh produce imported from mainland China into Hong Kong. The current arrangement covers the following categories: frozen and chilled poultry, meat and game, eggs, milk, fresh aquatic products, vegetable and fruit cans. Overall, about 10 percent of fresh food vehicles and over 60 percent of aquatic products vehicles currently use the Bridge to enter Hong Kong.

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ATO HONG KONG EVENTS CALENDAR



We are launching an events calendar to inform our readers of activities and events that ATO Hong Kong is hosting, sponsoring, or otherwise participating in. Updates will be added as new events are confirmed. If you have questions about upcoming events, please contact us at ATOHongKong@usda.gov.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 2024	10/23	U.S. Wine Masterclass (CWI)
	10/23-27	AIA International Conference Hong Kong (AHEC)
	10/31-11/7	JEBN Retail In-store Promotion (ATO HK)
Nov 2024	11/4	Delicious USA 2024 Media Launch (ATO HK)
	11/7-9	Hong Kong International Wine & Spirits Fair
	11/8	The Geographical Diversity of U.S. Wine with Mr. Reeze Choi (3rd of ASI Best Sommelier of the World 2023) (ATO HK)
	11/11 - 12/12	Delicious USA 2024 Restaurant Promotion in Hong Kong and Macau - Taste the Finest (ATO HK)
	11/19	The Great American Texas BBQ 2024 (USMEF, USAPEEC, ATO HK)
	11/22-24	International Food Beverage Asia Fair in Macau
2025	2/6-9	Pet Show Hong Kong
	2/21-23	Vegetarian Food Asia
	5/14-16	HOFEX / ProWine

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Attachments:

No Attachments.