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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 partners with the U.S. Meat Export Federation and the Texas Beef Council for the Great American Texas Barbecue 2024; ATO Hong Kong creates a social media stir as top Hong Kong mixologists showcase their appreciation of U.S. distilled spirits; a new visa scheme for Shenzhen travelers gives a boost to Hong Kong restaurants; Hong Kong International Airport again named top cargo hub in Asia; major spirits retailer cuts prices on premium brands following duty reduction; and a new bargain retailer enters the competitive Hong Kong retail space.



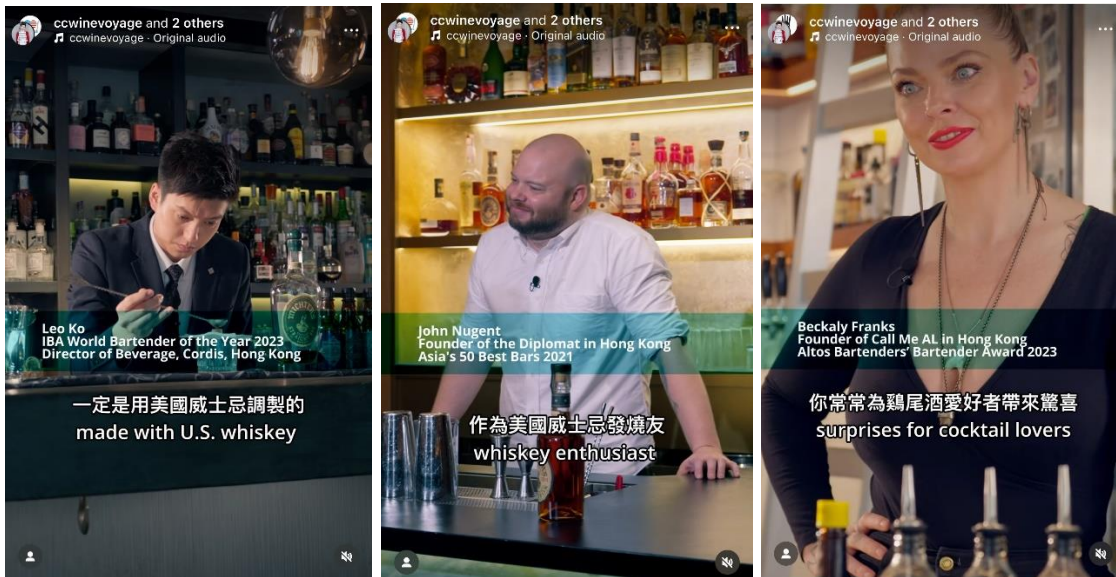
“The Great American Texas BBQ” Fires Up Over One Thousand Members of Hong Kong’s Food and Beverage Community



On November 26, 2024, the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF), along with Co-Organizers ATO Hong Kong and the Texas Beef Council, welcomed over 1,000 members of Hong Kong’s food and beverage community to “The Great American Texas BBQ 2024.” U.S. Consul General, Greg May, greeted an ebullient crowd of chefs, culinary directors, importers, wholesalers, and other meat lovers who experienced a taste of Texas on the grounds of the Kowloon Cricket Club. The event featured 31 food and beverage stations showcasing dozens of U.S. beef and pork preparations as well as U.S. poultry, cheese, wine, and spirits. Make sure to check out the event highlight [on our LinkedIn page](#) and see if you can spot the Consul General wrangling cattle!

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Top Hong Kong Mixologists Showcase U.S. Spirits in ATO Social Media Series



To raise the profile of U.S. distilled spirits among Hong Kong’s growing cocktail culture, ATO Hong Kong worked with popular wine and spirits critic Cecilia Wong to produce a series of interviews and cocktail demonstrations with three high-profile mixologists. In each video the featured mixologist shares their experience with U.S. spirits as well as two U.S. spirits-based cocktails. The series have generated 175,037 views and 2,641 interactions. Check out the videos of mixologists [Leo Ko](#), Director of Beverage, Cordis Hong Kong, World Bartender of the Year 2023, [John Nugent](#), Founder of The Diplomat, Asia's 50 Best Bars 2021, and [Beckaly Franks](#), Founder of Call Me Al, Altos Bartenders’ Bartender Award 2023.

Local Food Manufacturing in Hong Kong



hard red winter (HRW) wheat. Nissin continues to expand its product portfolio, which now includes juices, yogurt, and salads.

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ECONOMY



Multiple-Entry Individual Visit Scheme Expected to Boost Hong Kong's Retail and Catering Sectors [[The Standard](#), Nov.29]

Travel Industry Council Executive Director Fanny Yeung Shuk-fan announced that the multiple-entry Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) for Shenzhen residents is expected to boost visits to Hong Kong by over 10 percent during Christmas, benefiting the retail and catering sectors but not significantly impacting hotels. Tourism Association Executive Director Timothy Chui Ting-pong estimates a 10 to 20 percent annual increase in Shenzhen visitors. **ATO Notes:** From December 1, 2024, Shenzhen residents are allowed an unlimited number of visits to Hong Kong within a year upon receipt of a travel visa. The scheme is expected to boost the number of Shenzhen visitors to the benefit of restaurants and retail. Hotels may benefit to a lesser degree due to the proximity of Shenzhen allowing for same-day travel.

Hong Kong Products Expo Eyes 30 Percent Jump in Attendance After Return of Multiple-Entry Visas [[SCMP](#), Dec.4]

The Chinese Manufacturers' Association of Hong Kong expects higher attendance and more mainland Chinese visitors at the 58th Hong Kong Brands and Products Expo, running from December 14 to January 6 at Victoria Park. The reintroduction of multiple-entry visas for Shenzhen residents is expected to boost foot traffic. The 24-day event features 420 exhibitors with over 900 booths, offering significant discounts on various products. Organizers estimate the expo will attract 1.3 million visitors, a 30 percent increase from last year. **ATO Notes:** The Hong Kong Products Expo will be one of the first major events to benefit from the recently updated Shenzhen visa scheme. If a 30 percent increase in visitors is realized, this would be a welcome, positive sign for Hong Kong retailers.

Hong Kong Airport Named Best Aviation Cargo Hub in Asia-Pacific for Third Year Running [[SCMP](#), Dec.1]

Hong Kong International Airport has been named "cargo airport of the year (Asia-Pacific)" for the third consecutive year at the 11th Payload Asia Awards. The airport was also named "cargo hub of the year" at the 40th Air Cargo News Awards in London. Additionally, it won "best cargo hub" and "best sustainable initiative" at the Super Terminal Expo 2024. Executive Director of the Airport Authority Cissy Chan emphasized the airport's commitment to strengthening its position as a leading international aviation hub and boosting regional economic growth. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong International airport remains the world's busiest cargo airport. In the first ten months of 2024, the airport handled 4 million tons of cargo, a 15.4 percent increase year-on-year.

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HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, AND INSTITUTIONS



Unagi Yondaime Kikukawa Opens its First HK Restaurant in Causeway Bay [[The Standard](#), Dec.2]

Renowned Japanese unagi wholesaler Unagi Yondaime Kikukawa opened its first store in Causeway Bay on December 2, with its Hong Kong office serving as the regional headquarters for East Asia. According to Invest Hong Kong, this move is part of the chain's effort to leverage Hong Kong as part of its Asia expansion plan to promote Japanese culinary culture. CEO Shoogo Abe announced plans for two more stores in Hong Kong and a new casual unagi cuisine brand. Arnold Lau, Associate Director-General of Investment Promotion, highlighted Hong Kong's appeal as a global gourmet hub. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong consumers have a well-established fondness for Japanese culture and cuisine. The city has one of the largest numbers of Japanese restaurants outside Japan. Total restaurant receipts in the third quarter of 2024 dropped 1.3 percent to \$3.43 billion compared to the same period in 2023.

Hong Kong's Water World Lost \$25.7 Million Last Financial Year, Ocean Park Chairman Says [[SCMP](#), Dec.3]

Hong Kong's Ocean Park chairman revealed that its Water World facility lost \$25.7 million (\$200 million HKD) in the last financial year, despite a five-year high in attendance. Lawmaker Michael Tien questioned the park's sustainability post-2026 when government funding ends. Tien suggested transferring Water World's management to the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, but Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism Kevin Yeung rejected this. Water World will close for winter from October to reduce losses. **ATO Notes:** Along with Hong Kong Disneyland, Ocean Park is one of Hong Kong's two major theme parks. Food and beverage sales at the park in 2024 increased 31.5 percent to \$27.60 million, compared to 2023. Earlier this year, Ocean Park welcomed the birth of twin panda cubs, which sparked pandemonium among residents and tourists. The city hopes that the panda fever could be turned into a promising "[panda economy](#)."

Hong Kong Hoteliers Brace for 'Worrying' Trends as Lodging Tax, U.S. Trade War Dent Tourism [[SCMP](#), Dec.8]

Hong Kong's hotel industry is expected to face more challenges in 2025 due to a new 3 percent lodging tax and heightened geopolitical tensions. Hong Kong's appeal as a tourist destination has diminished, dropping to 21st in Euromonitor International's index of top 100 destinations. Hong Kong received 36.7 million visitors from January to October 2024, a 37 percent increase from the previous year but still below pre-pandemic levels. Mainland Chinese tourists, who make up the majority of visitors, have shown weaker spending power. Rising operating costs and new competition from upcoming hotels add further pressure. **ATO Notes:** The HRI and retail sectors in Hong Kong continue to face challenges, including changing consumer habits, lower consumer spending, labor shortages, and high rents. The

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Hong Kong government (HKG) is actively working on plans to stimulate the local economy and consumption. Businesses are hopeful that a series of culture, sports, and tourism-related mega events will improve international tourist sentiment in 2025. For more information, see ATO Hong Kong's GAIN report – [Hotel Restaurant Institutional Annual](#).

André Cheong: F&B Establishments Gaining From Simplified Licensing Processes [[Macau Daily Times](#), Dec.12]

Macau lawmaker Wang Sai Man pointed out that the lengthy process for F&B establishments to obtain a license and apply for permits for non-resident workers (TNR) causes significant operational delays of up to four to six months, severely impacting their cash flow. She urged improvements in the license processing time. The Secretary for Administration and Justice, André Cheong, responded that the existing system is already a significant improvement over the old one, with processing time approximately halved. Cheong rejected the old trial opening system due to safety concerns. **ATO Notes:** There are 528 licensed restaurants in Macau, among which 16 are Michelin-starred. The Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) of Macau conducted a Business Climate Survey on Restaurants & Similar Establishments with 229 participants. Results indicated that in September 2024, receipts of the interviewed restaurants and similar establishments dropped 5.5 percent compared to the same period in 2023.

RETAIL



Cheers as Watson's Wine Cuts (Liquor) Prices by up to 60 Percent [[The Standard](#), Nov.28]

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee announced a duty reduction on high-end liquor to promote trade growth. Watson's Wine is significantly reducing prices on over 100 premium spirits, with discounts ranging from 20 percent to nearly 60 percent, following the Hong Kong government's initiative to lower duty rates on high-end liquor. **ATO Notes:** The HKG announced in October a significant reduction in the duty on imported alcoholic beverages with an alcohol content above 30 percent by volume. The lower duty is expected to support greater consumption of distilled spirits and is particularly beneficial to premium brands. For more information, see ATO Hong Kong's GAIN report [Hong Kong Lowers Liquor Tax in Boost to Distilled Spirits Trade](#).

'Survival of the Fittest': Landlords Give Discounts to Five Guys, Others Amid Retail Slump [[SCMP](#), Dec.5]

Hong Kong landlords are offering more discounts to distinctive brands to attract tourists and locals amid a challenging retail environment. Analysts expect brands with international appeal to drive new demand for retail space in 2025. Five Guys, with nine locations in Hong Kong, appreciates the more lenient landlords and plans to expand into the New Territories. Vacancy rates in core shopping districts have

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slightly decreased. **ATO Notes:** Although offering discounts reduces revenue for property owners, hosting well-known brands and retailers' aids in bringing in other top-level tenants. Established international brands like Five Guys often have a loyal customer base that can attract more customers.

Can Mainland China Bargain-bin Grocery Stores Push out Hong Kong's Dominant Chains? [\[SCMP, Dec. 7\]](#)

New entrant HotMaxx is winning customers by offering prices at a fraction of what ParknShop charges, bringing mainland sales tactics to Hong Kong. This grocery chain from mainland China, which made its debut in Hong Kong in September, has quickly drawn attention from locals because of its impressively low price, such as a can of Coca-Cola for \$0.39 (\$3 HKD) or 375ml bottle of whisky for \$3.21 (\$25 HKD). The prices are significantly cheaper than many mainstream supermarket chains. **ATO notes:** The entrance of this deep discount chain could provide one more reason for Hong Kongers to reduce their visits to Shenzhen for purchases of cheaper priced groceries as wholesale clubs like Sam's Club and Costco.



TRADE

Hong Kong Plans 37 Priority Farmland Areas but Critics Say Some Good Sites Left Out [\[SCMP, Dec.5\]](#)

Authorities plan to designate 37 priority sites for agriculture, covering around 980 hectares, mainly in North district, Yuen Long and Tai Po. Critics argue that good-quality farmland in new development areas, such as the Northern Metropolis, is excluded. Environmental groups and non-governmental organizations question the criteria for site selection and express concerns over the prioritization of development over farmland protection. **ATO Notes:** Geographically, Hong Kong minimal arable land. Most farms in Hong Kong are small and produce leafy vegetables or small volumes of pigs or poultry. The HKG continues to promote sustainable development for the industry rather than efforts to substantially increase production.

Hong Kong Suspends Imports of Poultry Meat and Products from Four U.S. Counties [\[CFS – Press Release, Dec. 17; CFS – Press Release, Dec. 3\]](#)

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has suspended poultry imports from Adair County, State of Oklahoma, Meeker County, State of Minnesota, Pinal County, State of Arizona, Missoula County, State of Montana and Sacramento County, State of California following a notification from the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). **ATO Notes:** In the first ten months of 2024, U.S. poultry meat exports to Hong Kong grew 42 percent to \$115 million. In contrast, U.S. egg exports contracted 80 percent to \$1.5 million.

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The ATO events calendar informs 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 any of the upcoming events, please contact us at ATOHongKong@usda.gov.

ATO EVENTS CALENDAR



UPCOMING EVENTS

**Feb
2025**

2/6-9

Pet Show Hong Kong

2/6-19

Kai Bo Retail In-store Promotion (ATO HK, USMEF, Sunkist Growers, Washington Apple Commission)

2/21-23

Vegetarian Food Asia

**Mar
2025**

3/12-14

APLF Leather

**May
2025**

5/14-16

HOFEX / ProWine

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Attachments:

No Attachments.