

Study Reports That Americans are Ready to Dine on Authentic Dishes From Singapore

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To determine if American palates were ready to sample traditional Singaporean dishes, such as Singapore Chili Crab, Hainanese Chicken Rice, and Singapore Laksa Noodle, a survey of 1,000 US consumers was conducted last month by International Communications Research.

Of those surveyed, more than 50%, ages 18-44, said that they were willing to prepare a Singaporean meal at home with pre-packaged ingredients, and that authentically prepared Asian dishes were preferred 47% to 42% over Westernized versions. In addition, the majority of respondents (63.7%) stated that they were willing to pay \$5.99 for a pre-packaged Singaporean meal that required adding chicken, beef or fish to the recipe for an entree that would serve four.

"Singapore is a modern 'foodie' paradise -- a little island located in the center of Southeast Asia. Singaporeans are really quite discerning about food and have been the beneficiaries of a truly Asian fusion cuisine, which combines the great food traditions of Asia, Southern Chinese, Malay/Indonesian and South Indian food -- a reflection of its multicultural immigrant society," adds Mr. James Ching, Centre Director of IE Singapore's New York office.

The Lonely Planet calls Singapore one of the top 10 food cities in the world, and Anthony Bourdain recently aired an episode on Singapore's hawker (street vendor) food on the Travel Channel. Rapper Ludacris just opened a Singapore-inspired restaurant in Atlanta. Each year, thousands of New Yorkers flock to the one-day Tiger Beer Chili Crab Festival, an annual event growing in popularity. Some of Singapore's food exporters of all natural products have also begun making headway into stores such as Whole Foods Market. They join the growing number of food experts and chefs, tourists and business travelers who count themselves fans of Singapore food.

Chinese food topped Americans' Asian food preferences at 70.6%, followed by Japanese (24.4%), Thai (19.2%), and Indian cuisines (12.4%). The number one influencing factor for trying a new Asian cuisine is the recommendation of a friend or family member (61.1%), followed by a new restaurant (22.5%), with cooking media accounting for 19% of those surveyed. As to dining preferences, 51% of those surveyed preferred to eat out, 22.8% preferred take-away, and 17% ate at home.

A surprisingly high percentage of respondents (82.4%) stated that they use ethnic products in the home and this increased to 91.6% among 18-34 year olds and 87.6% among 35-44 year olds. According to those surveyed, Asian food products are purchased at the supermarket (38.5%), followed by Wal-Mart/Costco (19.9%), and ethnic stores (17%).

"This little tropical island, slightly smaller than New York City, has some of the most amazing cuisine in the world, a food culture that pays as much homage to the 40,000 street food vendors, who offer great variety at a low cost, as to the highly rated fine dining establishments. Many American food celebrities and chefs such as Anthony Bourdain, Jean-Georges Vongerichten, and Anita Lo travel to Singapore for the unique dining experience, as well as to get new ideas," continues Ching.

The US imported close to half a billion US dollars of Singapore food products last year. IE Singapore hopes to grow these numbers over time, with a mix of both awareness-building and business generating initiatives such as the annual Tiger Beer Chili Crab Festival in New York City, the annual Tasty Singapore Culinary Mission, which attracts the attention over 50 American corporate chefs, food buyers, and food journalists and which will be held once again in Singapore in June 2008, collaborations with the James Beard Foundation on Tasty Singapore dinner receptions in New York, and by participating in specialty gourmet trade shows in the US, such as the Annual National Food show organized by Tree of Life in Dallas, Texas, Efficient Collaborative Retail Marketing show in Arizona and the Fancy Food Shows.

IE Singapore is an economic agency under the Ministry of Trade & Industry promoting the overseas growth of Singapore-based companies and international trade.

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