

Japanese Consumers seek for the Healthy qualities of Olive Oil

The best chances of success of olive oil, in the medium and long term in Japan, focus on becoming a healthy product and competing directly with other oils and food products beneficial to health, according to a study by ICEX Spain Exports and Investments.

The report notes that the Japanese consumer continues to pay close attention to packaging design, content information and labeling. The containers used generally have a volume of 200, 250 or 500 ml., since they don't consume oil daily. In general, bottles and containers in Japan are usually not larger due to the reduced space of the kitchens of their homes. Generally, the packaging that seems to enjoy greater popularity is the one in bottles of 250 ml. and 500 ml., although more and more formats of 750 ml are being sold, and even those up to 1 liter.

Likewise, the proliferation of Western restaurants, especially Italian and Spanish, and their diversification towards less exclusive segments of average purchasing power, have facilitated the familiarization of Japanese society -especially regarding new generations- with the European and Mediterranean diet.

According to the study, young Japanese women are also increasing their interest in using olive oil for their skin and hair care.

On the other hand, the factors that determine consumers' choice of purchase are mainly quality, price, the number of calories and an easily understandable labeling. However, nowadays the price is acquiring greater force as a determining factor; in the case of olive oil, being considered a healthy product, the Japanese consumer is willing to pay a little more, as long as the product is of high quality. Among its main clients, are mainly women over 55 years.

The use of olive oil in salad dressing is also very popular, although there are many kinds of salad dressings, which are more popular among Japanese consumers. In addition, it is still not usual to use it for frying or cooking, as they use Japanese seed oils that can be purchased at a much lower price.

According to Japan Trade Statistics, between 2005 and 2016, imports of Japanese olive oil have grown 78% to reach their peak in 2015 with more than 59,500 tons; while in 2016 the figure was of 58,485 tons.

Japan is the third non-European non-producer country to import most of the world's olive oil, accounting for about 4.7% of world imports of olive oil. Between Spain and Italy they share almost 95% of the market, although the association between the product and the country provides a great competitive advantage of "brand" to the Italian companies, that are thus very favored by the association between the Italian food (pasta) and olive oil.

In fact, the study indicates that the boom of this kitchen in Japan, which has given exclusivity to the public use of olive oil and its relationship with Italy, together with the greater investment capacity of Italian companies, is one of the main limits interposed to a greater growth of the exports of Spanish olive oil.

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