

Demand for Kosher in Brazil

By *Andrea da Silva Stevenson*

Brazil has a limited but significant kosher market. The Brazilian Jewish community is the seventh largest in the world and the second largest in South America, with an estimated 130,000 families. They buy 85 percent of all the kosher foods consumed in Brazil. Other ethnic and religious groups and vegetarians account for the remaining 15 percent. For example, Lebanese, Syrians and some Seventh Day Adventists are important consumers of kosher products.

Most Kosher Products Are Imported

Despite the small size of Brazil's kosher market, some of the country's food processors have begun manufacturing for it; however, most kosher products sold in the country are imported.

A few importers deal exclusively with kosher products. These companies have been in the market for several years and have gained the respect of Jewish organizations and individuals.

Consumers and merchants often consult rabbis about suppliers. Some mainstream importers also buy kosher foods, particularly during the Jewish holidays of Passover, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkoth.

Kosher foods are consumed mostly by people with high purchasing power. These customers are less price-sensitive than the overall population. Since local kosher food production is limited, Brazilian kosher customers look to imports for variety.



There is room for growth in the Brazilian kosher import market. Non-Jews who are health-conscious also form a key consumer segment. Promoting the quality and safety of kosher products may also represent an opportunity to develop this market and increase consumption.

Opportunities for U.S. Suppliers

Most imported kosher foods market-

ed in Brazil come from the United States and Israel. All major U.S. kosher certifications are accepted in Brazil. Israeli products usually cost less, but there is more variety in U.S. products.

Popular kosher imports in Brazil include fruit juices, red and white wines, sparkling wines, gefilte fish, matzos, soups, fish balls, seasonings, ketchup, mustard, jellies, cookies, chocolates, buns, canned

BRAZILIAN KOSHER CUSTOMERS LOOK FOR VARIETY FROM IMPORTS.

tuna, mayonnaise and pie dough. Locally produced kosher wines are often considered too sweet. Several of the preferred kosher wines are from California. Brazil offers significant opportunities for U.S. dry red and white wines, including sparkling wines, which are difficult to find in the local market.

Among Brazilian consumers, U.S.-made kosher foods have a good reputation. The primary U.S. kosher food brands in Brazil are Manischewitz, Tampree and Kedem.

Importers generally avoid purchasing perishable products from the United States. Kosher meats mainly come from domestic processors or from Argentina. Imports from Argentina tend to be fresher and are assessed low or no import duties, because Argentina is one of Brazil's partners in the MERCOSUR trade bloc. (The others are Paraguay and Uruguay.)

However, rib steaks, rib roasts and vacuum-packed meats represent a potential market for U.S. exporters. Frozen meats (including salami, pastrami and corned beef), smoked salmon, beef bologna and most types of dairy products (such as frozen whipped cream butter and cheeses) offer potential export opportunities.

Retail Outlets

Kosher foods and ingredients can be found at independent stores located near Jewish communities and in some high-end stores, mainly in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre. Kosher products are also sold at a few supermarket chains such as Carrefour, Pão de Açúcar and Wal-Mart. Pão de Açúcar, one of the largest Brazilian supermarket chains, has a section for kosher foods.

Import Regulations

Brazil treats kosher foods as it does other imports for customs duty purposes. Tariffs range from 11.5 to 21.5 percent, depending on the product.

Kosher products should be shipped to Brazil well in advance of targeted holiday sales dates in order to clear Brazilian customs and be delivered in time for final distribution. A period of 60 to 70 days must be allowed from the time a product is ordered to its availability for store shelves.

Due to the relatively higher prices of imports, small retail food packages that are within their price range are popular with Brazilian consumers. All foods and beverages must have labels that provide the

For information about Brazilian kosher-certified restaurants, catering services and hotels, a local Jewish organization maintains lists on its Web site at: www.BEITLUBAVITCH.org.br

consumer with precise, clear and easily readable information about the product in Portuguese, the official language. The label must include the name of the product, ingredients, country of origin, storage instructions, net contents in metric, production date and shelf life. The Brazilian importer is responsible for label translation and registration.

Imports of wines, beer and spirits, as well as animal-origin products such as meats, seafood and dairy items, must be handled by a Brazilian company registered with MAPA, the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply. All unprocessed products of plant origin such as fresh fruits and nuts must be accompanied by a Plant Protection and Quarantine Phytosanitary Certificate from USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Frozen fruits and vegetables do not need phytosanitary certificates. ■

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