

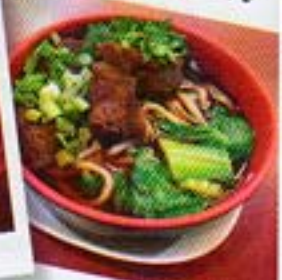
A Taste of Asia

As the number of Asians living in America continues to rapidly climb, such metropolitan areas as Minneapolis-St. Paul see the effects firsthand. The population of Asian and Pacific Islander residents in Minnesota, for example, projects to rise by 30 percent from 2005 to 2015, according to the U.S. Census

炸醬麵
PORK WITH SOYBEAN
PASTE NOODLE
\$5.95/bowl



台灣牛肉麵
TAIWANESE ST
BEEF NOODLES S
\$5.95/bowl



Promotion Idea

Asian supermarkets such as United Noodles in Minneapolis participate in the Chinese tradition of carrying red envelopes – a symbol of luck and wealth – in their stores for customers to use during special occasions.

Red envelopes often are presented at social and family gatherings such as Chinese weddings or on holidays such as the Chinese New Year. The red color of the envelope symbolizes good luck. According to tradition, the red envelope wards off evil spirits.

- Chinese New Year — Jan. 26, 2009 — is the Year of the Ox

Bureau. That's on par with states like Washington, indicating that growth of this important demographic group is not restricted to the Pacific Northwest.

At United Noodles, billed as the largest Asian supermarket in Minneapolis, co-owner Ramon Tan says their deli product lines diversified – slowly but surely – to keep pace with changing customer tastes since the store opened in 1972.

"We are trying to find a niche," he says. "We started as a very small store, but now we serve foods from 15 countries."

United Noodles, now 20,000 square feet, specializes in foods from China, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, Korea, Hong Kong, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Singapore and Sri Lanka. Their chef is from Taiwan, and so the store serves noodles that are more familiar to Taiwanese or Vietnamese customers than to Chinese. Deli favorites include roast pork, roast duck, sticky rice dumplings, and their signature Taiwanese Beef

Noodle Soup.

"In Taiwan, they prepare a big noodle. The taste is different than a Chinese noodle because they use a beef bone to flavor the noodle," Tan says.

One factor influencing America's interest in Chinese culture and food is the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, China. Acclaimed Chinese chef Martin Yan recently entertained a national television audience with his tips on how to prepare Chinese noodles during a segment on *The Today Show*.

For United Noodles, this evolving trend brings with it the need for more innovations at store level to sustain continued growth. United Noodles is preparing to install a *teppanyaki* grill in the deli department of one of its two locations. *Teppanyaki* is a cooking style that involves grilling meats, vegetables and rice on a flat iron griddle (also known as *hibachi*).

"The grill will be coming soon," Tan says. "We will offer a mixture of tastes from the Orient."

JOHN UNREIN

Sushi & More

It's time to turn your sushi bar into a dinner destination and bring the Asian-fusion trend—which combines fare from countries such as China, Japan and Korea—into the deli. Building an Asian-fusion meal program around best-selling California and spicy rolls can be as simple as adding side dishes to the sushi case.

According to an October 2007 National Restaurant Association survey, 62 percent of chefs said Asian appetizers were "hot," and 20 percent named them a perennial favorite. Hook restaurant-skipping consumers with Chinese appetizers such as egg rolls, crab Rangoon and pot stickers. These meal starters can be refrigerated, packaged with soy or sweet-and-sour dipping sauce, and sold in a refrigerated section near the sushi case.

Edamame, the popular green soybeans, can be packaged shelled or in the pod and make a nutritious addition to any Asian meal. Southern Tsunami from Advanced Fresh Concepts markets the beans straight from the sushi case. Japanese miso soup can be sold from a display rack placed next to the sushi case. Southern Tsunami offers just-add-water traditional and tofu varieties that consumers can heat at home. Wasabi paste, soy sauce, sauce bowls and multi-use chopsticks can also be merchandised with the dry miso mix.

Wet salads, made in-house, make great Asian sides. Sesame-sprinkled soba and udon noodles, from Japan,



make delicious cold salads. Edamame, calamari and seaweed salads can all be sold from the sushi case. Or use signs to steer customers from the sushi bar to the wet salad case, where offerings such as Thai cabbage slaw have enjoyed popularity.

And don't forget dessert. Asian-inspired desserts are unexpected treats, and proper signage to the freezer or instore bakery aisles can easily direct customers to such cross-promotions. Maeda-En, a Japanese company located in Irvine, CA, offers mochi ice cream in flavors including green tea, strawberry, vanilla and mango. A layer of mochi, a Japanese snack made from sticky rice, covers an ice-cream ball beneath.

For those willing to experiment a little, your bakery can make beautiful Asian desserts using Kataifi, a shredded fillo dough from Athens Foods. The fillo can be shaped into nests,

cones and twists. Athens suggests filling nests with Asian pears in a ginger-infused sauce.

To make a shredded fillo nest (any size):

- Separate dough into strands.
- Moisten with oil, butter or margarine.
- Press strands over the bottom and sides of buttered muffin pans, custard cups, small bowls, tart shells or pie pans.

General Baking Instructions

1. Bake unfilled shapes in a preheated 375°F oven for approximately 15 to 20 minutes, or until fillo is golden brown.
2. Bake filled shapes in a preheated 350°F oven for approximately 20 to 25 minutes or until filling is done and fillo is golden brown.

Source: www.athens.com

SHANNAN TUCKER