

Potatoes USA Seminars Launch New Uses and Channels for U.S. Potatoes

Numerous new menu items and food products launched in the Philippines during the current year owe their genesis to a Potatoes USA seminar. Of the twenty-six foodservice operations and suppliers launching a new U.S. potato item so far, at least ten launches were a direct result of participation in a Potatoes USA seminar. By utilizing MAP funds to conduct a series of three types of specialized seminars aimed at different market niches, Potatoes USA has made the seminar a key tool by which it increases not only overall usage of U.S. potatoes, but also taps new sectors, new products, and new applications.

Helped in part by the new product launches, exports of U.S. frozen potato products grew 8% by value during the first six months of the current fiscal year, reaching \$30.2 million in the July-December 2017 period. Similarly, exports of dehydrated potato products doubled, reaching \$4.9 million during the first six months of the current fiscal year.

While the Philippine foodservice industry is well aware of the availability of U.S. fries, it continues to lack a full understanding of the many products available and the uses to which they can be put. Outside of the traditional quick-serve and western-style restaurant segments, many foodservice members are unaware that the U.S. offers a potato product to suit their needs.

To address this, one of the seminar types offered by Potatoes USA has been a series of Livelihood Seminars. Held in November 2017, this is a new activity aimed at home-based business owners, of which there are thousands in the Philippines. These seminars introduce small business owners to the potential uses of U.S. dehydrated potatoes, showing them how they can create better products and make more money using U.S. dehy. An example of the success of this activity is shown by the food and baking entrepreneur D'Day Dreamer, which has begun using U.S. dehydrated potatoes in its Halal products. While many of the new businesses targeted by this activity are small, they are driving new sales: according to a leading importer, their 2017 sales increased by 40%, and they estimate that 20% of total sales went to individual/home-based buyers developed through the Livelihood Seminars.

Another new seminar, which was conducted for the first time in August 2017, was a U.S. Potato Hotdog Application seminar. This demonstrated how U.S. dehydrated potatoes can be utilized as an ingredient to make hotdogs. So far, one participant, a small hotdog manufacturer and restaurant called Burger Company, found its initial trial production received such positive reviews that it added the U.S. potato hotdog to its offerings and is now a regular buyer of U.S. dehy. Several other participants are currently conducting product trials.

Meanwhile, Potatoes USA continues to regularly conduct its chef menu development seminars, which it initiated some years ago as a way to introduce chefs from all types of restaurants to the versatility of U.S. potato products. These focus on conveying U.S. attributes -- such as nutrition, convenience, high quality and profitability -- while using a chef to demonstrate numerous new dish ideas using U.S. frozen and dehydrated potatoes. These continue to be highly successful, with a seminar conducted in October 2017 convincing three restaurants to immediately become new users of U.S. frozen potato products, including one that switched from European fries. In conducting follow up with seminar participants, Potatoes USA has found the seminars often yield results further down the road. For example, at least three restaurants added new menu items this year as a result of a seminar in MY 16/17, including two that represented non-Western ethnic restaurants.



Hotdog restaurant Top Dawg launched potato mojos using U.S. frozen potato slices after attending a menu development seminar; while Burger Company found that U.S. dehydrated potatoes make a great ingredient for its homemade in-house hotdogs, thanks to a Potatoes USA application seminar.