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U.S. hamburger chain restaurants offer some unusual items in Japan

Famous American hamburger chain restaurants such as McDonald's, Burger King and Wendy's have had varying degrees of success in Japan over the years. Many foreign food chain restaurants have flopped (Nathan's, Arby's) because they have not been able to adapt their menus to suit Japanese consumers. The hamburger chains generally have had better success than most. While their menus are predominantly the same as in the U.S., they are also selling original items for Japan. Here are a few examples.

McDonald's Japan

The Teritama burger is selling for a limited period only. Based on the popular McDonald's Teriyaki McBurger, it consists of a juicy pork patty with ginger flavored teriyaki sauce, fried egg, lettuce and sweet lemon sauce. Teritama's "Teri" is from Teriyaki and "tama" is from Tamago (egg). There are also "Cheese Teritama" which is "Teritama" with cheddar cheese, and "Sakura (Cherry blossom) Teritama" which is "Teritama" with light pink sakura sauce for spring.

Ebikatsu (shrimp cutlet) contains crunchy shelled shrimp. Its taste is enriched by Thousand Island sauce with many vegetables such as onions, olives, and so on, fresh lettuce, mustard and buns with sesame.

McDonald's Japan often runs campaigns to sell unique burgers in Japan, such as Gurakoro Burger which contains cream croquette with macaroni and shrimps in winter, Tsukimi Burger which contains fresh egg, beef patty, smoky bacon, original sauce (mayonnaise with tomato sauce), and buns with sesame in September and October, and so on. Furthermore, McDonald's Japan sells not only original burgers but also original side menus such as American cherry shake.

Burger King Japan

In March, Burger King released an apple-topped burger called BK RiNGO for a limited time. BK RiNGO is a Whopper Jr-sized burger sandwiching a grilled beef patty, lettuce, honey-mustard sauce, and a 7mm slice of a flame-grilled apple.

Grill Teriyaki is Burger King Japan's original item. It uses a 13-cm bun, a 100g smoked beef patty with a blend of dark soy sauce and teriyaki sauce. Kids can try the Grill Teriyaki Jr, which uses a 10-cm bun and 60g beef patty.

Wendy's Japan

Two years after exiting the Japanese market, Wendy's returned to Japan last December. It has four types of "Japan Premium" products only available in Japan, including the Foie Gras Rossini with original foie gras terrine. Wendy's says the burger accounts for 15% of its sales.

The three other "Japan Premium" items are the Avocado Wasabi burger, the Truffle & Boletus Grill Chicken which contains expensive mushroom truffles, and The Chili Burger featuring chili sauce and double cheddar cheese.

Questions

1. Do you like these Japanese adaptations? Why? Which ones? Or, why not?
2. Do you think it's necessary for foreign restaurants to adapt to Japanese tastes to be successful? Why? Why not?
3. What changes do you think these companies make for other countries? Do you know any real examples?
4. Do you prefer to eat at an authentic foreign restaurant, or one that has adapted its food to Japanese tastes?
5. What kind of changes would you make to Japanese foods to make them successful in these countries: United States, France, Mexico, India, South Africa, China? Consider the following food: taco-yaki; sushi; okonomi-yaki; yakitori; ramen; soba;
6. What changes do you think these Japanese chains should make to adapt their products to the countries listed above: yoshinoya; yaruki-jaya; ten-ya;
7. How do you think these famous foreign foods should be adapted to the Japanese market? Fish and Chips; Hot dogs; Lasagna; paella.

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