

Air Mail from Setouchi

2009

3
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Feature 1

We went to Dubai in the Middle East!!

Feature 2

in our daily life **HACCP**

What is the "preservative" which we hear often when we talk about food additives?

Recommended recipe Fried halfbeak with beefsteak plant leaf



We deliver seasonal seafoods from the bounty of the sea all over Japan

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The Gulfood 2009, an international food exposition, was held in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), for four days from February 23 (Monday) through 26 (Thursday). Our company participated in the exposition with four staff to widely and actively publicize our fresh yellowtail products to visitors coming from all over the world.



According to the information from the organizer, approximately 3,000 firms exhibited at the show, and about 15,000 people, or up 50% from the previous show last year, visited during the four-day event.

About 4,100 visitors came to the Japan Pavilion, in which we set up our booth, along with more than 10 Japanese exhibitors. In the Japan Pavilion, our sushi sampling trial corner attracted a special attention. Many people stopped at our booth to see with much interest the skillful cutting of fish with a carving knife and cooking sushi by our young chef, Mr. Yagi.

Contrary to our anticipation that people overseas, especially those in the Arab countries, may have considerable resistance to the Japanese habit of eating raw fish, many local people were delighted to eat sushi, bringing our sushi sampling trial to a success. As a result, we served only raw fish (sushi and sashimi), although we brought teriyaki sauce (sweetened soy sauce for broiled yellowtail) with us from Japan.



We were impressed strongly by folk costume in Dubai, which was represented by white clothes with sandals for men and black clothes for women. We found a unique atmosphere at this sight, but, seeing them eat sushi at our booth and talk using cell phones, we felt a deep sense of closeness to their daily life and thought that human beings are the same despite national and ethnical differences.

The population of Dubai is slightly over two million, 80% of which are immigrants from overseas who are mostly engaged in construction projects. The burst of the bubble economy seems to have affected this city under the impact of global financial contractions since last year. Here and there we saw construction works for high-rise buildings being suspended. With little rain and because of sands brought by the wind from the desert, the sky seemed so opaque and misty that we could not see stars at night.



Before closing this article, I would like to tell you one happening while we were in Dubai. Mr. Kyo, who is a young leader of our company's team, needed an entry visa to Dubai, unlike other Japanese staff, because he is a Chinese national although he has lived in Japan for many years and is married to a Japanese wife.

He ventured to go out of Japan without visa (after some bandying of words with officials at the airport in Japan). As expected, he was stopped by immigration office in the Dubai International Airport, and was forced to stay at the airport for a whole day. (We later learned from him that he could stay in a luxurious (?) hotel in the airport, and on top of that, could drink his favorite beer to all his heart's content.)



Other staff was totally exhausted, considering that he might be deported to Japan. But we were relieved to know that his visa was issued finally.

Probably because of his character, he made friends with Chinese living in Dubai, and, together with General Manager Takeda (only woman staff in our team) and Mr. Yagi, sneaked into backstreets of Dubai where there were suspicious-looking Chinese people live as we see in Chinese movies. I thought the Chinese connection was truly wondrous.

It is an additive designed to restrain propagation of microorganisms in the food and enhance preserving capability. (Note: It differs from antimicrobial substances which are aimed at killing microorganisms, and no antimicrobial or antibacterial substances are not included in 18 items of food additives. However, fungicide is included. The general public should know these differences because they can very often be led to misunderstanding.)

What kind of preservatives are there?

There are many, but the kinds that can be used in Japan are limited. The one most often used is benzoic Na.

It is an easy-to-use preservative. As it is composed chemically, it is relatively less expensive and is soluble in water and has effects to restrain propagation of various types of microorganisms. However, the effectiveness differs depending on pH of the food. (Effectiveness is higher when the acidity is higher.)

It is contained in diverse foods and it is also used for detergents, such as shampoo. Effects appeared to the functions of liver and kidney as well as DNA composition. For this reason, similar effects can be considered for humans. It has been reported that, when 0.27g of benzoic acid per head was given to rats, half of them died.

It is also reported that the above symptoms are not observed in ordinary life in Japan as safety effects are accurately measured and the criteria for its use are established.



Extract of salmon soft roe protein (salmon soft roe protein, protamin, nucleoprotein)

This is an extract of special protein called protamin and histon which is found in soft roe of salmon. This is also effective in preventing propagation of microorganisms. It is stable even when heated, and is often used for fish paste (surimi) products. In Japan, there is a habit of eating salmon soft roe and there is no limit for consumption as toxicity was not observed in various experiments.

Sorbic acid, potassim sorbate

At present, the synthetic chemical product is used. Its antibacterial power is not so strong, but it is used for a variety of food because it is soluble in water and is widely effective against fungi, ferments, and bacilli. Depending on conditions, it has some effects in restraining botulinum bacteria. Its toxicity is said to be not so strong unless its density is high, but it had various effects on mice. It is often used because its risk rate is relatively low and is effective in preserving food. However, after experiments of giving 4mg per 100g weight to mice for a duration of 17 months, the weight growth was slowed, and liver, kidney and spermacry became smaller. Further, when 740mg each of sorbic acid was given to mice of weight of 100 grams, the half of them died. Therefore, it is a substance not to be consumed so often even it is of low density.

Propionic acid

It exists in nature as metabolite of microorganisms. It is included in fermented foods, such as miso (bean paste), bread dough, wine and cheese. It prevents propagation of fungi and sporogenesis. Its characteristics are that it does not much affect the ferments used for fermentation of bread. It is used often as it is soluble in water and easy to preserve. People in olden times unawares used the power of microorganisms. Various toxicity experiments were carried out but no carcinogenicity or toxicity to internal organs was detected. When propionic acid is consumed in large quantities (26 grams for a rat of weight of 100 grams), about half of the animals tested die.

Polylysine

It is made from actinomyces which is close to fungi. Its component is a substance close to lysin which is our essential amino acid. It is effective against most bacilli and ferments, but not so effective against fungi. There has been no report about its possible carcinogenicity and toxicity. No change was observed when about 300mg of polylysine was fed to 100g rats.

Recommended recipe

Fried halfbeak with beefsteak plant leaf

Ingredients:

- One to two halfbeaks
- Two to three beefsteak plant leaves
- Plum pulp (appropriate amount)
- Starch powder ● Salt (appropriate amount)

How to prepare

- ① Slice halfbeak in half and remove abdominal bones
- ② Slightly cut open the fish meat in the middle and insert two to three beefsteak plant leaves and wrap the fish from the head. Fix the fish meat with a tooth pick.
- ③ Dredge the fish meat in starch powder and fry it in oil at 170 degrees centigrade
- ④ When fried, pour salt lightly for serving.



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