Bite Size Local News, Post Report and Activity Summaries

THE HONG KONG WONTON

wrapped by ATO Hong Kong

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Celebrating 250 Years of the United States and 50 Years of USMEF with The Great American Texas BBQ in Hong Kong



Over 1,150 Hong Kong food and beverage industry professionals joined the 2026 Great American Texas Barbeque on October 27 at the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club, setting a new attendance record for the event. Organized by the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) and ATO Hong Kong, the trade-oriented event featured Chargé d'Affaires David Schlaefer (pictured left) as well over 40 food and beverage booths supported by 80 U.S. brands and local food distributors. Guests were treated to an expansive showcase of U.S. beef, pork, lamb, and wide array of accompanying U.S. food and beverages. Held annually, this year's event highlighted the 250th anniversary of the United States, the 50th anniversary of USMEF, and the strong commercial trade ties that make Hong Kong a top ten market for high-value consumer-oriented products and the sixth-largest market for U.S. beef and beef products. Check out the event highlights on our Instagram page!

Cheers to 250:
U.S. Alumni Wine Tasting



On October 14, Consul General Julie Eadeh joined ATO Hong Kong and Watson's Wine, the region's largest wine retailer, to host an exclusive U.S. Alumni Wine Tasting at The Murray Hotel. Commemorating the 250th anniversary of the United States, the event showcased a diverse selection of premium wines from California, Washington, and Oregon to approximately 70 prominent U.S. university alumni based in Hong Kong—successfully strengthening trade and cultural ties.





Celebrating Freedom 250 Pavilion Reaches 170,000 Visitors at Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival

More than 170,000 visitors attended the 2026 Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival, held from October 29 to November 1 at Hong Kong's iconic harbor front. This year, with support from the U.S. Consulate General Freedom 250 initiative, ATO Hong Kong sponsored a USA Freedom 250 Pavilion to showcase American culinary excellence. The USA Pavilion featured a unified commemorative branding theme and iconic American cuisines including Cajun and Creole, Texas Barbeque, cinnamon buns, dozens of U.S. wines and spirits, and a U.S. wine masterclass at the Grand Wine Pavilion.



Food Export–USA Northeast Seafood Chef Training Seminar

On October 23, ATO Hong Kong supported Food Export–USA Northeast Seafood at a Chef Training Seminar at Hotel ICON, drawing approximately 40 chefs and Food and beverage (F&B) industry professionals. The event showcased the distinctive quality, nutritional value, and pristine sourcing origins of seafood from the Northeastern United States. Through product briefings, live culinary demonstrations, and tastings, participants gained first-hand experience with the flavor profiles and culinary versatility of these regional products, successfully strengthening trade engagement within Hong Kong's culinary sector.

ECONOMY



Hong Kong's Economy to Grow by 4.1 Percent This Year, HKU Says [The Standard, Oct. 15]
The APEC Studies Programme of the Hong Kong Institute of Economics and Business Strategy at The University of Hong Kong (HKU) expects Hong Kong's economy to grow 4.1 percent in 2026, up 0.4 percentage points from the previous forecast, reflecting better-than-expected foreign trade growth in the first half. It expects growth to slow to 3.7 percent in the third quarter due to weaker consumer sentiment. Private consumption expenditure is estimated at 2 percent in the third quarter, down from 2.8 percent in the previous quarter. Visitor arrivals continued to rise, boosting tourism-related service exports. Gross fixed capital formation is expected to accelerate to 10 percent from 4.4 percent. Trade protectionism, Middle East tensions, and uncertain interest rates may slow external trade. Unemployment should hold at 3.8 percent. **ATO Notes:** The Hong Kong government raised its 2026 real GDP growth forecast to 3.5 to 4.5 percent, up from 2.5 to 3.5 percent in May, after first-half growth of 5.1 percent. HKU is more cautious about consumer spending in the second half of the year, while the government expects domestic demand to stay firm, supported by retail sales growth of 5.6 percent in August and more visitors.

HK Talent Schemes Draw 690,000 Applications, 320,000 Arrive: Eric Chan [The Standard, Oct. 25]
Hong Kong has received approximately 690,000 applications across its various talent admission schemes as of September, with around 320,000 individuals already arriving in Hong Kong. Chief Secretary for Administration noted that China's 15th Five-Year Plan also supports Hong Kong's development into an international innovation and technology (I&T) hub and a premier cluster for high-caliber global talent. Hong Kong will better leverage its roles as a "super-connector" and "super value-adder" while cooperating with other Greater Bay Area (GBA) cities to promote the region's talent appeal. **ATO Notes:** A March 2026 Hong Kong Council of Social Services (HKCSS) study found that more than 95 percent of arrivals come from mainland China, most arrive with dependents, and most earn above Hong Kong's median income. These households focus on their children's education and wellbeing and get information mainly through Xiaohongshu and WeChat. These mainland arrivals offer a new and growing group of consumers for promoting imported U.S. food and beverages.

HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, AND INSTITUTIONS



Why Foreign Companies are Still Betting on Hong Kong's Culinary Reputation [SCMP, Oct. 21]

InvestHK helped 516 companies set up or expand in the year's first eight months. A South Korean hydroponic ginseng grower and a 123-year-old Japanese confectioner chose Hong Kong for their first overseas ventures. They cited its status as Asia's top fine-dining market, its flexible process for setting up a company, and its potential as a springboard to regional markets. Weak home markets are pushing Korean and Japanese firms abroad. Hongkongers' fondness for Japanese and Korean products and their willingness to pay a premium make the city receptive. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong's reputation as Asia's premier fine-dining market serves as a major magnet for international culinary innovation. Beyond mainland F&B brands, global enterprises increasingly use the city as a strategic springboard for regional expansion.

20 Restaurants Prosecuted for Allowing Dogs without Permits since Scheme Launched [SCMP, Oct. 18]

Since the dog-friendly dining scheme began on July 9 in Hong Kong, 940 restaurants and eateries have started allowing customers to dine with their dogs. The scheme drew about 20 complaints in its first week. Hong Kong authorities have prosecuted 20 restaurants for unlawfully allowing dogs onto their premises since the scheme launched in July. Seven people have also been prosecuted for bringing dogs into eateries without permission, and four others for failing to keep their pets securely leashed in restaurants that allow dogs. **ATO Notes:** Driven by over 400,000 cats and dogs across 240,000 households, Hong Kong's booming pet economy received a boost in July 2026 with a government scheme permitting dogs in licensed restaurants. Although over 990 venues have joined—some, projecting a 20 percent sales increase, many have withdrawn. Space limitations, labor shortages, and hesitant patrons reveal that implementing pet-friendly dining remains a challenge for smaller or traditional food businesses.

Restaurant Business Grows 10 Percent on First 2 Days of Break as Arrivals Top 2018 Peak [SCMP, Oct. 3]

Mainland Chinese visitor arrivals in Hong Kong during the first two days of the National Day "Golden Week" exceeded the pre-pandemic total for the same period in 2018. A catering sector representative reported a 10 percent year-on-year rise in restaurant receipts, but some eateries outside tourist hotspots saw customer traffic fall by 30 percent. Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism Rosanna Law said global conditions pose challenges, particularly in Southeast Asia, where high airfares have made short-haul travelers less willing to visit Hong Kong and spend money there. Even so, she said she was confident Hong Kong would reach its target of 53.8 million visitors ahead of schedule. **ATO Notes:** Following a 0.7 percent year-on-year increase in Hong Kong's restaurant receipts to $7.1 billion in the first half of 2026, the surge in holiday spending during the National Day 'Golden Week' provides definitive proof of a recovery back to pre-pandemic levels.

DFI Retail Sells Stake in Maxim's in Return for Starbucks Business, $340 Million [SCMP, Sep. 30]

Maxim's Caterers has struck a deal to buy back its shares from DFI Retail Group for $340 million plus control of its licensed Starbucks business. DFI Retail will take over operations of more than 1,100 Starbucks outlets across Asia and receive $340 million in cash in exchange for its 50 percent equity stake in Maxim's. **ATO Notes:** This transaction reflects DFI's ongoing strategic transition from an investment holding company to a focused operating model. By acquiring direct control of the Starbucks licensed business rather than maintaining a joint-venture equity stake, DFI intends to leverage operational synergies across its supply chain, procurement, real estate, and data segments.

RETAIL



Increase in Visitor Arrivals during Golden Week Boosts Business across Industries [HKSAR, Oct. 8]

A total of around 1.6 million inbound visitors were recorded during the Golden Week. Among them, mainland visitors accounted for more than 1.41 million. The National Day fireworks display and other Golden Week activities effectively attracted visitors and stimulated consumption, with retail sector indicating that consumer spending in various retail categories saw single-digit to double-digit growth year-on-year, while the catering sector also indicated that businesses in tourist areas increased by about 10 percent. The overall hotel occupancy rate reached 90 percent. **ATO Notes:** The increase in visitor arrivals and holiday spending provided a boost to Hong Kong's retail and food service sectors, particularly in tourist areas. While the reported retail growth was not specific to food products, stronger visitor traffic may create additional demand for imported snacks, confectionery, beverages, and other packaged foods. U.S. food and beverage items that are unavailable or with limited distribution in mainland China could benefit from targeted promotions during peak holiday periods.

DFI to Continue Investing in Hong Kong Supermarkets [SCMP, Oct. 9]

Hong Kong's DFI Retail Group plans to continue investing in new supermarkets and upgrading existing stores despite cautious consumer spending. Its supermarket brands, including Wellcome, Market Place, 3hreesixty, and Oliver's, operate more than 325 stores and serve over 14 million customers monthly. The company is seeking opportunities to strengthen its network in locations with sufficient customer demand and attractive long-term returns. **ATO Notes:** DFI's continued investment highlights the importance of modern supermarket networks in Hong Kong's competitive food retail market. Its focus on store upgrades and selective expansion suggests that retailers are prioritizing store productivity, shopping experience, and locations with strong consumer demand rather than aggressive network growth.

Market Place Launches Month-long Australian Food Fair in Hong Kong [CLBB, Oct. 11]

Under the DFI Retail Group, Market Place supermarket chain launched its month-long "Taste of Australia" promotion, featuring more than 500 food and beverage products from over 70

Australian brands, including more than 200 items newly introduced to the supermarket. Running through October 29, the promotion showcased Australian wagyu beef, salmon, fresh produce, snacks, coffee, and dairy products. The campaign demonstrates how supermarkets use country-themed promotions to introduce imported products and attract consumers. **ATO Notes:** Market Place's Australian food promotion illustrates the competitive positioning of imported food suppliers in Hong Kong's premium supermarket segment. Country-of-origin campaigns provide opportunities to introduce new products and strengthen consumer awareness. Australia, UK, Canada, Japan, South Korea, and various EU countries all frequently hold country-specific retail in Hong Kong.

A-1 Bakery Opens New Bakery+ Concept Store at Festival Walk [A-1 Bakery, Oct. 3]
Japanese-origin bakery chain A-1 Bakery Group, which operates more than 120 outlets in Hong Kong, opened its new Bakery+ concept store at Festival Walk. Unlike traditional bakery outlets, the new concept offers an expanded selection of baked goods, coffee, light meals, soups, and takeaway options throughout the day. The launch reflects the company's efforts to diversify its offerings and attract customers seeking convenient, higher-quality dining experiences. **ATO Notes:** The introduction of hybrid bakery-café formats highlights opportunities for bakery operators to expand beyond traditional bread and pastry sales. This trend could create additional demand for imported bakery ingredients, dairy products, cheese, nuts, and other premium U.S. food ingredients.

TRADE AND POLICY



Hong Kong Continues to be World's Freest Economy [HKSAR, Oct. 6]
The Fraser Institute's Economic Freedom of the World 2026 Annual Report, released October 6, again ranked Hong Kong as the world's freest economy. Hong Kong placed first in "Freedom to trade internationally" and second in "Regulation." In response, the HKSAR Government said it will keep its free port status, zero-tariff policy and low tax regime. It also reported that more than 11,000 companies in Hong Kong had overseas or mainland parent companies in 2025, up 11 percent from 2024. In the first eight months of this year, InvestHK also assisted about 520 mainland and overseas enterprises in setting up or expanding their businesses in Hong Kong. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong's zero-tariff, free port regime lets U.S. food and agricultural products enter without import duties. U.S. agricultural and related exports to Hong Kong rose 19.2 percent to $1.23 billion in January to August 2026, led by U.S. beef exports which rose 65.2 percent and tree nuts which increased 294.2 percent.

Tourism Supporting Facilities at Lei Yue Mun [HKSAR, Oct. 7]
In a written reply to the Legislative Council on October 7, 2026, Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism Rosanna Law described government efforts to make Lei Yue Mun, a waterfront area known for its seafood restaurants, more attractive to visitors. The Tourism Commission has encouraged local restaurants to offer specials to visitors, and some travel agencies now include Lei Yue Mun Seafood Street on their tours. On August 24, 2026, the Transport

Department launched a new minibus route linking MTR Yau Tong Station with the area. A weekend ferry service via the new public pier ended after its trial because demand stayed low. **ATO Notes:** The Hong Kong government is promoting the Lei Yue Mun seafood district to visitors through a new minibus link, more signs and travel-agency itineraries, though a trial ferry service ended because of low demand. Higher visitor traffic could support restaurant demand for imported seafood. U.S. seafood exports to Hong Kong rose 3.6 percent to $73.0 million in January to August 2026.

MACAU



31st MIF, 2026PLPEX and 2026MFE to Open on 21 October, Bringing Together Portuguese- and Spanish-Speaking Resources to Expand Global Business Opportunities [IPIM Macao Special Administrative Region, Oct. 15]

Macau held three trade fairs at the Cotai Expo on October 21–24: the 31st Macau International Trade and Investment Fair (MIF), the 2026 Portuguese-Speaking Countries Products and Services Exhibition (PLPEX) and the Macau Franchise Expo. According to the organizer, the Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), the fairs brought together about 1,000 exhibitors from more than 30 economies. They included nine Portuguese-speaking countries and a new pavilion for 11 Spanish-speaking countries, including Spain, Argentina and Uruguay. Featured food products included Brazilian coffee, Spanish Iberian ham, wine and confectionery. **ATO Notes:** More than 50 mainland and Macau trade promotion associations and chambers of commerce, including CCPIT and the Macau Importers and Exporters Association, met in Macau on October 21 to expand Greater Bay Area trade with Portuguese-speaking countries. The meeting reinforces Macau's role as a state-backed channel for competing suppliers, such as Brazil, to reach mainland buyers.

ATO EVENTS CALENDAR



USDA United States Department of Agriculture

DELICIOUS USA

UPCOMING EVENTS

Nov 2026	**Nov. 1 - Nov. 30**	**USA Rice Deli Fest (USA Rice)**
	Nov. 1 - Nov. 30	**U.S. Thanksgiving Festival at Delifans (ATO HK, USAPEEC, USMEF, ASMI, CAB)**
	Nov. 5 - Nov. 7	**HKTDC Hong Kong International Wine & Spirits Fair (ATO HK)**
	Nov. 9 - Dec. 22	**Hong Kong Liquor Store U.S. Spirits Promotion**
	Nov. 13 - 30	**American Whiskey Trail Hong Kong (ATO HK)**
Dec 2026	**Dec. 1**	**U.S. Seafood Showcase (ATO HK)**

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