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Southeast Asians crave taste in new indulgence era: Cargill Indulgence Study

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To advance insights-driven food innovation, Cargill has revealed findings from its first in-depth, category-focused Indulgence study for the Southeast Asia (SEA) market. The Cargill Indulgence Study SEA uncovers snacking attitudes and the consumption and purchase drivers of Southeast Asian consumers towards five categories of indulgent foods â?? sweet biscuits and cookies, sweet baked goods such as pastries and cakes, chocolate confectionery, ice-cream and cafÃ©-style beverages.

â??With rising incomes and a fast-growing middle-class population across Southeast Asia, consumers are increasingly seeking greater wellness, comfort, enjoyment and indulgence from food. Cargill regularly conducts proprietary research to ensure that we are supporting our customers in keeping pace with evolving consumer desires and preferences. This study is the first of its kind by Cargill looking at the indulgence category trends in the region to enable food companies to launch market-ready products that address growing demand for new flavors, formulations and menus,â? said Kashan Rashid, Cargillâ??s Vice President and Managing Director, Food Southeast Asia, Australia & New Zealand.

Cargill's study has shown there is a concerted consumer shift towards indulgent food experiences, even as the region shows a strong trend towards health and sustainability with respect to food. With taste and satisfying cravings being the key drivers of indulgence foods consumption, SEA consumers are turning to food for their everyday â??Treat Yourselfâ? moment. For example, amongst those surveyed, nearly 40 per cent of SEA consumers reported drinking indulgent cafÃ© beverages at least once a day, 45 per cent of SEA consumers reported eating cookies once a day and half of SEA consumers bought more ice cream in 2024 than in 2023. Food manufacturers will have to find new formulations that meet this growing need for indulgence while ensuring health benefits remain a key consideration.

Cargillâ??s study uncovered five key consumption and purchase drivers in Southeast Asia:

Taste is the top purchase driver, where 70 per cent of consumers are willing to pay more for unique tastes, with innovative flavours driving increasing purchases.

Elevated sensory experiences. 82 per cent of consumers value a 'super-sensorial' experience, and 79 per cent are likely to pay a premium for distinctive textural experiences.

Willingness to pay for quality and sustainability. Dark chocolate is highly preferred, with 77 per cent willing to pay more for gourmet ingredients. Additionally, 72 per cent are willing to pay a premium for sustainably produced indulgent foods.

Desire to eat healthy even while indulging. 69 per cent of consumers prioritise health attributes, with low sugar being the most influential factor.

Preference for Local. 67 per cent consider the country of origin important, with 65 per cent willing to pay a premium for local Asian ingredients.