



Dah Chong Hong, for example, with its 54 stores in Hong Kong, stocks nine flavours of Oasis juice from Quebec, Colonial cookies, and Billy Bee honey. You can also get Alberta beef, McCain's frozen pizza, Canadian salmon and vegetables such as peas, cauliflower, broccoli and carrots, all grown and packaged in Canada.

BC salmon can also be bought, for a hefty price, at Oliver's, as can that golden maple syrup. Look no further than the nearest USA & Co for Molson and Moosehead beer. If it's seafood you're after, live lobsters are imported by Man Ming Importing and Exporting Company. Ms Vivian Lee, the managing director, claims they have been doing this for the past 16 years and were the first ones to import to the territory.

If you had something sweeter in mind, Neilson's Canadian-made chocolate bars called Mr Big were launched in April 1993 by Metcorp (Hong Kong) Ltd in all 7-11 stores. Neilson's Sweet Marie, Crispy Crunch and Malted Milk are scheduled to hit major supermarkets and convenience stores in late September. Neilson dinosaur cookies and animal crackers are also being launched.

With these products, and many others, Canadian food imports to Hong Kong topped C\$76.5 million in 1992, representing a 36 per cent jump from C\$56 million in 1988.

Among the most popular items are seafood, meat, vegetables and fruit. Imports of seafood, for example, soared 81.3 per cent last year to \$25.2 million while imports of edible food and nuts climbed 70.6 per cent to \$2.9 million.

Canadian food imports to Hong Kong



In fact, many Canadians are probably enjoying products from home without even realizing it because a large chunk of import sales are made to institutions such as restaurants, cafeterias and hotels.

Officials say the biggest reasons for the dramatic increase in Canadian food imports are due to:

- the sharp growth of the Canadian population in Hong Kong, including Hong Kong natives who have returned to the territory after stays in Canada;
- more aggressive efforts by Canadian food manufacturers to tap the robust Asian markets;
- a weaker Canadian dollar, which has made Canadian products more price competitive and;
- an overall growth in trade between Canada and Hong Kong.

Chris Li, a commercial officer with the Canadian Commission in Hong Kong, said Hong Kong people want more choice and Canada has been able to capture niches to satisfy market demands.

Despite the large strides made over the past few years, Canadian food imports to Hong Kong represent just 1.1 per cent of the \$5.93 billion of total food imports into the territory. Canada trails countries such as Thailand and Australia, for example, which have imports of \$352

million and \$270 million respectively.

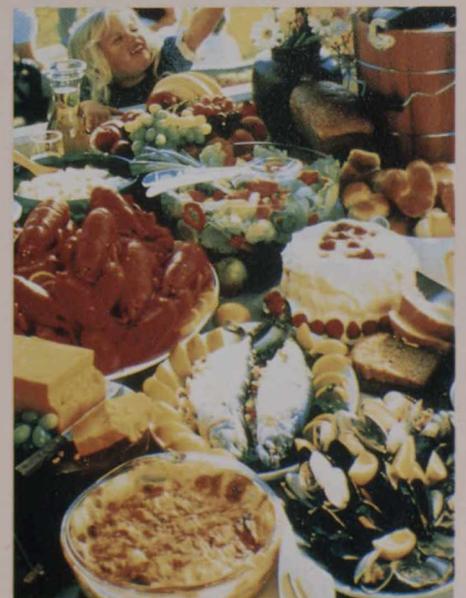
Local retailers and wholesalers say Canadian food producers have failed to fully capitalize on Canada's reputation for fresh, high quality products.

The biggest problem, they say, is inconsistent distribution, higher prices, a lack of money spent on promotion and advertising, and an unwillingness to cater orders for the Hong Kong market.

The distribution problems are more than evident to consumers looking for a taste of home who happily discover a store carrying a Canadian product one week only to discover on the next visit it has disappeared and might not be in stock for another six months. It's a scenario that sends many Canadians scurrying to write home for a "care package" from friends and relatives.

Bill Grimsey, managing director with the Park'N Shop supermarket chain, said dealing with Canadian producers has been a frustrating experience despite concerted efforts to promote their products.

"We tried over the past five years to kick start Canadian products here," he said. "We ran two Taste of Canada fairs featuring new lines and lines we already had but they were very unsuccessful.



A selection of seafood from Prince Edward Island is also popular fare in Hong Kong.