

## **Midwest**

### **Chicago**

The Chicago post territory, comprising three states (Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin) represents a population base of 23 million people. Chicago alone, the 3rd largest U.S. city with a population exceeding 7 million, is considered the largest, most ethnically diverse area in the midwest. Chicago ranked 3rd in overall volume of annual food sales in the U.S. in 1990. Over half of the supermarket share was attributed to two major retail grocery chains: Dominick's Finer Foods, Inc. (95 stores/25 percent market share) and Jewel Food Stores (219 stores/36 percent market share).

The Chicago foodservice industry is even more impressive. Seven of the top 50 American foodservice distributors (Kraft Foodservice Group, Alpha Distributors, Allen Foods, Inc., etc.) are located here and in 1990 these 7 companies collectively rang up a sales total of just under US \$4.4 billion.

Even though the current recession is keeping meals at an average cost of less than U.S. \$16.00 per person, Chicago consistently reaps the profits from its impressive hospitality industry which services the 3.2 million people attending any one of the 1,099 conventions, 157 trade shows, or the 26,255 corporate meetings.

Chicago is an excellent marketplace for the promotion and sale of Canadian food products because of the significant international trade shows that are held here annually. The National Restaurant Association Show is the largest foodservice/hospitality event in the U.S. The Show features over ten miles of exhibits and attracts more than 104,000 buyers, brokers, distributors and representatives. The Food Marketing Institute Show is the nation's premiere event for the supermarket industry and attracts 40,000 key decision makers. In addition, sector specific shows rotate through Chicago, such as those held by International

Fancy Food, the National Food Brokers Association and the American Meat Institute.

Each event is a forum for increasing product exposure, viewing competitive products, establishing marketing channels, and generating on-site and future sales.

Chicago offers a favourable market for introducing cost-competitive products especially those emphasizing quality, convenience, and "healthy" ingredients. The region's receptiveness to new products is further supported by Chicago's importance as a major distribution centre and its worldwide access via rail, truck, air and water.

### **Fish and Seafood**

Fish consumption in the United States is usually limited to the species indigenous to a particular region, but because Chicago can easily receive fish products from all parts of the world (O'Hare International Airport is number one for direct flights), the midwest enjoys the broadest variety of ocean, native, fresh-water and farm-raised products in the country. Because fresh fish, which is in great demand, can be transported quickly and easily to other midwestern states (a population base of 47 million), it is little wonder that Chicago has been deemed the "Seafood Capital of the Nation".

Chicago is very receptive to Canadian fish products. Every available species from Canada is already being purchased and marketed in the midwest. Accordingly, the Chicago fish community reports that speed is of the essence in ensuring choice goods; even the remotest suppliers can replenish inventories in less than a day, and any Canadian who cannot compete on these terms will be at a definite disadvantage here. It is also worth noting that a "good old boy" attitude toward Canadian fish suppliers exists here: Canadians are perceived as fair-minded people with quality products. Interested fish sellers can easily make contacts with appropriate buyers through the Consulate.

Recent meetings with well-established