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# From eggs to oranges

BY [DAVID TAN](#)

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THE TIAN TIAN brand of organic mandarin oranges from Southern China are making their first appearance in the Malaysian market this Chinese New Year.

Chop Tong Guan Sdn Bhd (CTG), one of the country's leading fruit importers, is bringing the organic and ordinary mandarin oranges from the counties of Yong Chun in Fujian, and Shantou and Longmen in Guangdong in Southern China. CTG started business in 1929 as a fresh egg trader

Tian Tian's non-organic mandarin oranges, already a household name in the local market, have managed to grab a sizable share of the domestic market over the past 18 years because of their fragrance, sweetness, and certain intensity of flavour that appeal to consumers.

According to CTG managing director Koay Swee Aik, in terms of flavour and taste, there is only a slight difference between the organic mandarin and normal mandarin oranges,.

All Tian Tian mandarin oranges share the same fragrance and zesty flavour, which reflects the quality of fertiliser, soil and and growing method of the orchards in Southern China, Koay says.

"Tian Tian organic oranges are grown using chemical-free fertilisers and pesticides. We want to tap into the market of consumers who prefer organically grown fruit.



Workers packing freshly imported fruits in the company's warehouse. – Photos by ASRI ABDUL GHANI

"This is the first time organic mandarin oranges from China are being brought into the country," he said.

The first batch of organic Tian Tian mandarin oranges has already arrived and more are on their way for the Chinese New Year. The shipments will include the honey murcott (normally from Argentina and Australia) and ponkam varieties, said Koay.

"However, the volume of imported organic mandarin oranges is still small, as it takes time to increase yields in organic production due to the stringent growing requirements," said Koay.

Organic Tian Tian oranges are priced around 10% to 20% more than the normal Tian Tian mandarin oranges, as the yield of organic mandarin oranges are still small.

"Our pricing is still competitive compared to other organic fruits in the market and we are still looking for market acceptance of the product," he said.

CTG is bringing in some 4,400 tonnes of organic and non-organic Tian Tian mandarin oranges from China this year, about 10% more than last year, to meet the growing demand for mandarin oranges during the Chinese New Year.



Fruits imported by Chop Tong Guan stored in a cold room in Bukit Minyak. Besides mandarin oranges, CTG is also bringing in Fressure brand guacamole spread from New Zealand.

Koay says Fressure guacamole dip received an award from New Zealand-based *Healthy Food Guide* magazine under the “Best Spread” category.

“This is the first time guacamole spread in consumer packaging is available in Malaysia. We expect the spread to do very well in, as it is made from ripened avocados, which are cholesterol and gluten free, 100% natural, and contain no preservatives.

“The Fressure brand of spreads come in a variety of flavours to suit different taste buds,” he said.

The Tian Tian brand was created in 1995, when CTG contracted several orchards in Yong Chun County, China to grow mandarin oranges.

“Since then, we invested heavily in post-harvest treatment and in branding the oranges as Tian Tian in the market. The Tian Tian brand is registered in China, Malaysia, Brunei, and other Asean countries,” Koay said.

Beyond investing in branding, CTG had also spent money to build cold rooms and packing facilities in Penang and Kuala Lumpur.

“Our first 1,500-pallet cold-room and pre-packing facility was established in Penang in 2002. A second 2,000-pallet cold room and pre-packing facility was built in Kuala Lumpur in 2008.

“Now the company is building a new 4,000-pallet cold room and pre-packing facility in Penang, which will start operations in May.

“We will invest in more cold-rooms to expand our presence in the country,” he said.

Koay added that the company will also invest in expanding its fleet of refrigerated trucks to service its customers throughout the whole country.

“Our customers, comprising hypermarkets and supermarkets, evaluate our company in terms of our cold room and pre-packing facilities and delivery services,” he said.

CTG currently has two warehouses in the Klang Valley and two in Penang.

Last year, CTG received the Asia Fruit Importer of the Year Award from trade publication *Asiafruit Magazine*.

The company is now the marketing agent for kiwifruits, apples, oranges, and avocados under the brands Zespri Green and Gold Kiwifruits, Pink Lady Apples, Ambrosia Apples, Kiku Apples, Washington Apples, Dutoit Apples, Sunkist Oranges, and Avanza Avocados.

It is also the wholesaler and distributor for all type of fresh fruits like grapes, pears, plums, cherries, blueberries, strawberries, peaches, nectarines, persimmons, avocados, bananas and mangoes.

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