

# CHINA

## Xizang's coffee blends with traditional flavors attract global attention

By **PALDEN NYIMA** and **DAQIONG** in Lhasa

Coffee infused with Tibetan flavors is drawing growing international attention, as emerging brands from Southwest China's Xizang autonomous region bring high-altitude taste traditions to global audiences.

Among them, Nindo Coffee has stepped onto the European stage, using international events to showcase blends inspired by local culinary heritage.

It made a notable appearance at the Paris coffee festival, held from April 11 to 13 in France, marking its second feature at a European event after debuting at a London coffee event last year.

"For us, going global is not about a one-time effort but rather a sustained journey. It's a process that has been unfolding for the past eight years," said Tsomo, the company's founder.

Nindo Coffee's Tibetan-style specialty blend is not merely a collection of coffee with added exotic elements. Instead, it is a reconstruction of taste inspired by Xizang's culinary and flavor traditions, incorporating elements such as salty milk tea and textures found in high-altitude diets, she said.

While Tibetan coffee remains in the early stages of global recognition, this emerging identity offers an opportunity to establish Xizang's presence in the coffee world.

At the Paris festival, Nindo Coffee's offerings impressed attendees not because of their novelty, but because of their distinct flavors. Guests revisited the booth and recommended the coffee to others, demonstrating growing enthusiasm.

To enhance the booth's appeal, the brand incorporated Tibetan visual elements, including incense cloths and opera masks. Together, these sensory details created an immersive experience for visitors, who lingered to learn more about the culture and stories behind the coffee.

Support from the International Culture Association of the Xizang Autonomous Region further boosted its presence, while coffee experts praised the depth of its flavor profiles.

Coffee enthusiasts and experts gathered in Paris and embraced Nindo Coffee's signature salted milk tea dirty blend.

Angie Molina, champion of the World Brewers Cup France 2025, marveled at its distinctive nature.

"This Tibetan coffee is incredibly unique — sweet, rich and balanced, and I absolutely loved it."

Nindo Coffee plans to host Xizang's own coffee festival in the future, fostering collaboration between domestic and global coffee brands, as well as holding the Lhasa regional round of the 2026 China Brewers Cup, the official selection channel of World Brewers Cup, to position Xizang within the professional coffee circuit.

The company's efforts come amid a flourishing coffee trend in Xizang, where street-side cafes have grown into hubs for socializing, leisure and work.

Chu Liqun, president of the Xizang culinary, catering, and hotel association, said blending coffee with Tibetan traditions has produced creations such as *tsampa* coffee and butter coffee, which embody the region's unique heritage, Xizang Commerce Daily reported. These varieties have gained widespread recognition and become cultural emblems of Xizang, Chu said.

Tashi Dundrup, a coffee enthusiast in Lhasa, said Nindo Coffee's appearance at the Paris coffee festival is a positive development.

"It not only introduces Tibetan coffee culture to the world, but also has the potential to attract more international coffee professionals to Xizang for exchange, thereby helping Tibetan coffee truly step onto the global stage," he said.

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Tsomo (second from right), founder of Nindo Coffee, poses for a photo with French coffee roasters at the Paris coffee festival. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



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## Protecting our planet

Students are immersed in creating a large painting themed "Cherish the Earth, Protect Our Beautiful Home" at a primary school in Zaozhuang, Shandong province, on Tuesday. The activity is part of a themed education campaign held ahead of the 57th Earth Day on Wednesday to raise awareness about environmental protection.

SUN ZHONGZHE / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Funding focus moving away from journal fees

### Researchers decry rising processing costs and impact on experimental work

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Faced with rising processing charges for international journal articles, China is advancing reforms in its scientific research evaluation system, aiming to channel more funding into actual scientific work and improve research quality.

Traditionally, journal publishing operated on a subscription model where readers paid and authors published for free. However, in recent years, the industry has shifted to an open-access model to facilitate the dissemination of scientific knowledge, allowing free reader access while authors pay fees to cover publishing costs. However, increasing article processing charges have become a heavy financial burden for scientists.

A report from the National Science Library of the Chinese Academy of Sciences showed that the average processing charge exceeded \$3,000 per article in 2024. Chinese scholars published 313,500 such articles, accounting for about one-third of the global total, and spent \$909 million, a year-on-year increase of more than 20 percent.

The phenomenon of China's research funding "subsidizing"

international publishers has long troubled researchers, who argue that high processing charges may entrench hierarchies, amplifying disparities in academic discourse power through financial means.

A graduate student at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Nanjing Institute of Astronomical Optics and Technology told China Central Television that if article processing charges consume a large share of research funding, experimental work will inevitably be affected.

Yan Ning, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, wrote on her Weibo account late last year that while the open-access model may have been well-intentioned, processing charges have become "excessively expensive". She added that her laboratory would no longer pay to publish articles requiring such fees, opting instead to post work as preprints and publish in journals only if fee waivers are offered.

"It feels like researchers are being exploited, making us suffer. Why should the funding we apply for be taken by middlemen?" Yan told CCTV. She noted that many publishing groups are publicly traded companies with commercial interests and expressed hope for restoring a healthy publishing ecosystem as a vital part of the academic community.

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To break the deadlock, China is promoting its own international academic journals. One example is Vita, a life sciences and biomedicine journal that will publish its print edition in June. Its main edition is open to researchers worldwide free of charge, and a study from Yan's team was the first paper published online in the journal.

Starting in March, the Chinese Academy of Sciences stopped using academic funds and central government allocations to pay publication fees for 30 international open-access journals, including Nature Communications, Cell Reports and Science Advances, according to the journal Science. In addition, reimbursement for processing charges is prohibited for articles published in journals suspected of academic misconduct. The measures aim to improve oversight of academic publishing and bring charges under reasonable control.

A series of other measures has also been introduced to guide research outputs toward domestic journals. Revised guidelines for national science and technology awards issued by the Ministry of Science and Technology call for a gradual increase in the proportion of major publications in domestic journals. The National Natural Sci-

ence Foundation of China has also introduced a requirement that for all projects funded since 2025, at least 20 percent of representative papers must be published in domestic journals.

Some universities have relaxed faculty recruitment and evaluation criteria, moving away from an exclusive focus on publication metrics to encourage a more flexible research environment. Tsinghua University now asks faculty to submit up to five works that best represent their academic level — including papers, monographs or patents — instead of emphasizing publication quantity or impact factors. Fudan University has established a basic research pilot zone to support long-term original research for more than 10 years.

Zhao Dongyuan, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and dean of the Xianghui Academy of Fudan University, highlighted the importance of such measures in giving original research more space in an interview with CCTV.

"Over a 10-year period, instead of evaluation, we organize salons and academic activities where researchers present their work. These presentations allow us to observe the progress of their research," Zhao said. "By fostering such a supportive research environment, we enable them to achieve significant breakthroughs."

### GBA PULSE

## Experts: Fuel crisis is both challenge and opportunity for GBA aviation sector

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The ongoing fuel crisis across the global airline market has disrupted millions of passengers' summer travel plans — and is potentially reshaping the international aviation industry.

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, home to several major airports, is also feeling the pinch. Yet experts said that the region's relatively stable fuel supplies may help it fill the gap caused by international flight reductions and accelerate its development as a world-class airport cluster.

In recent months, conflicts in the Middle East have driven up global oil prices and led to widespread supply shortages. As a result, the aviation industry has experienced increased fuel surcharges, flight cancellations on international routes, and soaring operational costs.

Jet fuel prices have reached a 10-year high. The domestic settlement price for jet fuel rose from 5,600 yuan (\$821) per metric ton in March to about 9,800 yuan per ton in April — a 75 percent monthly increase. International jet fuel prices have surged by more than 100 percent over the past two months, outpacing the rise in crude oil prices.

The surge in prices is rapidly eroding profit margins, leading many airlines to cancel routes that have

become unprofitable. During April and May, a traditional holiday season, a large number of flights from Chinese mainland cities to Southeast Asia and Australia, including popular destinations like Phuket, Bangkok, and Sydney, were canceled.

In Hong Kong, Cathay Pacific and its subsidiary Hong Kong Express have canceled about 2 percent and 6 percent of their passenger flights respectively, from mid-May through the end of June. Greater Bay Airlines has also canceled flights to Bangkok from May through September, as well as some flights to Taipei.

### Industry-wide blow

Zhou Shunbo, executive director of the New Economy Institute at the Shenzhen-based China Development Institute, said the fuel price surge has severely affected low-cost airlines, with larger carriers also feeling the strain. Coupled with the Russia-Ukraine conflict, these geopolitical tensions have dealt another blow to the international aviation industry, which has been slowly recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

He said he believes that while some domestic travel demand may shift to high-speed rail, the uncertainty surrounding international flights and short-term price fluctuations will dent people's willingness to travel abroad in the near future,



Travelers admire the *Wing Can*, a replica of China's first airplane, on display at Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport on April 10. The replica honors Feng Ru, a pioneer in Chinese aviation who built the original aircraft in 1909. PARKER ZHENG / CHINA DAILY

particularly among budget travelers.

Reduced passenger flights will also cut cargo capacity, potentially driving up shipping costs for goods that rely on air transport, such as precision electronic components and high-value seafood. This could further hinder the development of core industries and affect daily life in the Greater Bay Area, Zhou said.

If the situation persists, it may prompt national and local authorities to examine the long-term impact of rising fuel costs on urban development and to introduce policies to aid the aviation industry and its shift to sustainable energy, he said.

Zhou cautioned that flight slots at key international hubs — such as London Heathrow Airport — are highly valuable. If a carrier reduces its flights and gives up certain slots, they may be auctioned off to competitors, making it difficult to re-enter that market.

Given China's relatively ample supply of jet fuel, Zhou said he believes the Greater Bay Area has an opportunity to capture market share from affected global markets and further the goal of developing its local airports into international aviation hubs.

Timothy Chui Ting-pong, execu-

tive director of the Hong Kong Tourism Association, said that following the Labor Day holiday in early May, the entire summer season from June to August is peak travel time, coinciding with the start of the school semester. Many students studying abroad transit through Hong Kong, but these plans are now disrupted, he said.

Chui said that flight reductions would impact Hong Kong International Airport's high-frequency, transit network, and its globally leading cargo throughput, potentially weakening the city's competitiveness as an international aviation hub in the long run. Nonetheless, he emphasized that this is an industry-wide challenge troubling global airports.

He urged local airlines to maintain strategic routes connecting Hong Kong to Europe, Japan, the mainland and Australia, ensure a stable local fuel supply, and provide appropriate compensation to affected passengers to sustain confidence in local services.

If the fuel crisis continues, Chui suggested that the HKSAR government consider introducing support measures, such as reducing fees for aircraft parking and airport operations, and subsidizing key trunk routes.

### Bad news for travelers

The recent impact is especially felt during the Labor Day holiday, which

falls from May 1-5 on the mainland, and lasts three days in Hong Kong with a long weekend. Many travelers have taken to social media to share their experiences of flight cancellations and discuss how to recoup their losses.

Chen Xueqing, a traveler from Chongqing, booked a China Southern Airlines flight two months in advance for a vacation in Vietnam, which was subsequently canceled.

She had "carefully selected" the flight to avoid taking extra leave. Like her, many people assumed that the cancellations would mainly affect overseas carriers, not domestic ones.

Although she will receive a full refund, other flights on the same day had risen sharply to 5,000 yuan. Furthermore, she had already booked domestic flights and hotels in Vietnam, which were non-refundable, meaning she would incur losses regardless of whether she went or not. She later negotiated with China Southern Airlines and managed to rebook on an Air China flight on the same day.

To minimize potential losses, travelers are advised to prioritize major airlines with wide route networks, carefully review terms and conditions before purchasing international tickets, and opt for hotels and travel packages with free cancellation options whenever possible.