

Brazilians Fall in Love with Narghiles

Contributed by Marina Sarruf
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About four years ago, Nizar Escandar, a grandson to Syrians, established Empório do Arguile (Emporium of the Narghile), in the center of the city of São Paulo, a store that specializes in sales of tobacco and its accessories. In the beginning, Escandar used to travel to Syria and Egypt, from where he would bring the products.

Each year, approximately 1,500 units were imported. Currently, as the Arab fad is more widespread, the store imports up to 50,000 narghiles per year.

"The Brazilians are very receptive to Arab culture. It is a culture that is growing continually," said the businessman, who distributes narghiles to all regions of Brazil. According to him, the acceptance of the Arab product was such that now, Escandar has Arab and Chinese suppliers. "Every two months or so, I receive a container with 5,000 units," he claimed.

According to Escandar, after strong demand for narghiles emerged in other countries, Syria and Egypt started manufacturing the products in China on an industrial scale, offering more competitive pricing. At Empório do Arguile, it is possible to find the product at prices ranging at 50 Brazilian reais (US\$ 20), for the small variety, to 3,000 reais (US\$ 1,250), for the large ones.

"Our flagship product is small narghiles, but Brazilians are beginning to purchase the large ones as well," said the businessman.

Besides narghiles, the emporium sells tobacco, coal, blowtorches, cigarette holders, hoses, aluminum paper and all of the accessories required for the maintenance of the narghile. The products are also sold through the website of the store.

"I get from 15,000 to 18,000 visitors each month in my website," said Escandar, who travels at least once a year to see what is new. In 2008, the businessman went to China, Dubai and Syria.

Among the most sold tobaccos at the emporium are the two apples, mint, grape and melon flavors. "In the Arab countries, the most common are the two apples flavor. Here, they like to mix two different flavors together," explained Escandar.

He also imports flavors such as lychee, lemon, mint, strawberry, cinnamon, chocolate, bubblegum and even Coca-Cola. According to him, the most sold brands are Nakhla, Al Masah and Prince Molasses, from Egypt, Al Fakher and Havana, from the United Arab Emirates, and Afzal, from India.

At the website of the emporium, consumers may also read about the history of the Narghile, its functioning, oddities and smoking etiquette tips. "I think it is very import to convey this information to the public," said Escandar.

"The Arabs have an entire ethical code in order to smoke. You cannot blow smoke in the face of others, you must pass the hose folded," he stated.

Service

Empório do Arguile

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