



## Chicago Section IFT the First Section



### **CSIFT Suppliers' Night 2011 Observations from Dominican University Students** December 15, 2011

Chicago Section IFT is very appreciative of the time 30 Dominican University students spent volunteering at the registration tables for our 2011 Suppliers' Night Expo. In addition to volunteering, they were also required to complete a class assignment for one of the following courses: Basic Foods, Experimental Foods and Product Development. The students were encouraged to attend by their professor Caren Messina-Hirsch, a member of the Chicago Section.

As exhibitors, we understand that the focus of the expo is on new sales and the promotion of your particular product or service. But, there is also an opportunity to share information with those students interested in pursuing a career in food science and technology. The Chicago Section IFT wishes to thank each of the exhibitors who took the time to speak with these students and to share their knowledge.

Each student had an assignment to evaluate both food and beverage products and to document company/booth number, name of product tasted, ingredient highlighted, ingredient function, their personal evaluation of product tasted, nutritional or other product attributes. The Product Development class assignment was to locate specific ingredients, processing equipment, packaging material and testing facilities to assist with their semester product development project.

In addition, students were asked to comment on the following 4 questions. Here are some of the comments.

#### **What did you learn?**

- Each company that is focusing efforts on providing healthier products has their own definition of natural.
- There are many different ways to make foods healthier without sacrificing taste and countless ways to enhance flavors naturally without being chemically modified.
- Great experience because I got to take a look at different food products and flavorings that might be on the market soon.
- I did not realize how many companies were in the food business.
- This experience helped me to learn about new ways I can improve on my cooking especially when substituting sugar or salt.
- There is so much behind the scenes research that goes into every ingredient in every food product. I had never thought about using nonfat dried milk as an egg substitute, or yeast extracts as sodium replacers. IFT helps you to think creatively about food and nutrition.
- Some company representatives were very friendly and helped me answer the questions for this assignment while others seemed uninterested in informing me about their product because I was only a student.
- The world of food science and technology is far bigger than I had ever realized.
- I was exposed to the wide variety of products on the market today, which expanded my view of nutrition and food science career options.
- Now that I have seen the amount of detail that goes into packaged foods, I appreciate them much more.
- I also learned much of the science behind certain ingredients, such as how oleoresins are created and that you can put probiotics in chocolate!



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- I learned about the scarcity of cocoa right now. I was shocked to see the amount of companies putting out products that are chocolate replacers or amplify the chocolate flavor so that companies can put less cocoa in their products without the loss of flavor.

### **What was your greatest surprise?**

- I didn't recognize very many of the companies at IFT by their name. On the other hand, I recognized MANY products that used their ingredients like carbonated crystals used in Pop Rocks.
- The whole experience was entertaining and exciting rather than boring and dull like I expected. The atmosphere was very relaxed and I could move at my own pace. Another surprise was how interested I am in food science. I never knew this field existed and I'm glad I ended up going because now I think I am going to switch my major.
- I was surprised by how nice everyone was to me even though they knew I was a Dominican student. I did have to start the conversation and in a way pull the information out of them. I thought that for the most part the company representatives knew their stuff.
- Some companies went above and beyond with trying to attract people to their booths with games, brochures, samples and other things which were impressive. On the other hand, there were some booths that seemed to only have information sheets about their product and seemed bored with their role. It was definitely more inviting to see a booth with people standing behind it that were willing to help you learn and understand their goal.

### **What was the most exciting food, beverage, ingredient, piece of equipment that you learned about?**

- The Nature Wise Sweetener was 200 times sweeter than sugar and derived in Asian countries that used it for medicinal purposes.
- Yogurt parfait that the Penford Food Ingredient Company had presented. The highlighted ingredients were the starches. I found it intriguing that the starches had so many diverse functions.
- Starch gave the yogurt fiber, made it resistant to digestion, added creaminess, replaced fat and acted as a "viscosifier".
- Fibersol-2. There were several foods that contained Fibersol that I eat regularly.
- The ingredient Fibersol was part of Soy Joys. I've been eating these bars all of my life and I had never realized that such an ingredient was part of the bar. It was great to learn that one of my favorite snacks has a great fiber supplement added to it.
- Lo Han Guo, which is a sweetener from a Chinese fruit. I had never heard of this exotic sweetener, and although it is very expensive, it's so interesting to learn about the different possibilities that exist and may start showing up on the market.
- Brain Candy from RFI ingredients. It contains Chocamine which is a cocoa extract that does not contain the fat that chocolate usually does, and it also includes phytochemicals. It has been proven to improve cognitive function.
- Sub 4 Salt, salt replacer. I was happy to see that you could still get the taste with 35% less sodium with their product.
- Cake-flavored ice cream. This was the most incredible ice cream that I have ever had and I loved the cake batter flavoring.



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### **Was there something you would never forget about the experience?**

- It was a huge treat to have discovered the CSIFT Suppliers' Night. While I had heard of food science, I didn't realize how large it was. Even as a nutrition major, I have always found topics relating directly to food to be the most interesting. This experience had made me want to reexamine the career paths that are available in the nutrition/food production industry. I know now that I would definitely want to take more food science courses and this experience was absolutely responsible for that. I know that events like this are good resources for looking for jobs, which is something else that I will not forget.
- All of it! I never realized how much thought, detail, science and research goes into our food.
- It was very nice to see that people at the booths were not only there to do business but also presented their products and answered questions for students. This is something I will not forget, the fact that anyone curious about these products can come and learn about them.
- It is very important to know what we consume and by going to a show like this, one can learn about the latest food products and do research on the negative or positive impact of the product.
- Conversation with one supplier displaying a flavor enhancer and how hilarious and interesting the man was.
- All of the different products that I sampled. I am usually not the type of person to try something different but under these circumstances I tried a variety of products that I don't think I normally would have. Some of the items looked or smelled weird but once I tried them I was pleasantly surprised by the mixtures of flavors and textures. It was also exciting to know that we were trying some of the new up and coming items that will possibly be brought to consumers. You can see the different food trends and what is becoming popular among consumers.
- A lot of people didn't give us the time of day and there were a few who could just tell were so passionate about what they do. It is such a great way of networking and I feel like once I am closer to graduation, this would be an even greater experience.
- How much of an appreciation I've gained for food technologists and food scientists.
- We went up to our first booth and the salesman immediately jumped into our conversation and began firing off information about his product. He tried to relate to us and he made the conversation cater to our interests and applied his product to our daily lives.
- How enthusiastic some sales people were about explaining their product and making sure all of your questions were thoroughly answered. I was also never forget about how uninterested and rude a few of the salespeople were. It taught me that in the real world, you must be friendly and enthusiastic if you want customers to be interested in your product.
- There are people working to modify food products that will probably help us in the future by improving our health.

Thanks again to Caren Messina-Hirsch and her students from Dominican University for sharing and helping us all to view food science with fresh new eyes!