

## Winter 2014 Fancy Food Show



The Winter Fancy Food Show in San Francisco is a great place to explore new foods and flavors. Chicago Dames were among the buyers, the exhibitors and the trend watchers at the show. In addition to the dames headquartered in Chicago, Linda Calafiore met up with friends from Chicago and Nancy Hopkins was an official trend spotter for the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade (NASFT).

Buyers attending the show represented many of the nation's leading gourmet and specialty food retailers as well as major supermarkets, mass merchandisers and foodservice industry segments including college and university, casinos, healthcare and quick service restaurants.

The Fancy Food Show continues to grow with more than 18,000 attendees and 1,300 exhibitors representing over 35 countries. New international exhibitors were from Uruguay, Israel, South Korea, India and Thailand. There were close to 100 first time exhibitors with a diverse range of handcrafted products including kombucha, filet mignon jerky, chickpea chips, sweet potato and orange ice pops and lavender caramel sauce.

Chicago Dames who attended the show shared some of their thoughts on what they enjoyed most this year.

For Sofia Solomon, the Fancy Food Show is mostly about meeting with her producers and suppliers, specifically Chantal Plasse and Pierre Arnaud from France, Roberto Stucchi-Prinetti from Italy, and Gerard Vea from Spain. Her interests lie mostly in savory items, so being able to taste a true jambon, Bayonne was an unexpected treat for Sofia which unfortunately, is about two years away from being able to be imported into the U.S. She noted new harvest oils from the Mediterranean basin and California as the highlights of booths featuring olive oils and that flavored non-alcoholic drinks of all kinds, teas, sodas, tisanes were in abundance. She also found a wonderful new chocolate drink that can be served either hot or cold, produced in NYC and being marketed as "ultra-creamy melted chocolate." Her comment after tasting, "it truly is." Sofia also shared, "It was sad to note that the world-wide economy has affected several of the international pavilions, which were very limited in attendance. Perhaps they're saving their limited funds for the big show in NYC in the summer?"

Diana Moles was delighted to visit with one of her favorite vendors, Stahlbush Island Farms, a family owned farm in Willamette Valley, committed to sustainable agriculture. "I was excited to see and taste dozens of Stahlbush's Oregon grown organic berries, fruits, legumes, grains and vegetables. And having just finished processing 340,000 pounds of Stahlbush pumpkin puree – all without a hitch, I was pleased to be able to give them my thanks and hugs."

Linda Calafiore said, "The fancy food show for me was about delicious chocolate — Vosges blood orange caramel anyone? — and having dinner with Sofia Solomon, Jolene Worthington, and Dianna Moles followed by being served Frontera Foods tacos by JeanMarie the following day. It is always so comforting connecting with all of my Chicago friends."

Jolene Worthington also enjoyed getting together in San Francisco and seeing a radiant JeanMarie Brownson serving a steaming skillet of shrimp at the Frontera Foods booth. JeanMarie said, "The crowds were hungry! We served more than 1,000 Key Lime Shrimp and Beef Barbacoa Tacos at Frontera's newly-designed booth, plus more than 10 gallons of Frontera Guacamole!"

To restore their energy, the Frontera Foods team enjoyed some great food in San Francisco including State Bird Provisions, Locanda and TBD. They also loved The Cavalier by restaurateur Anna Weinberg and Executive Chef Jennifer Puccio. JeanMarie said, "Their beef dripping chips just might be the best French fries we've ever tasted, triple fried and served with horseradish and wine jus."

On exploring the city, JeanMarie said, "We couldn't resist the stunning, contemporary pastries at Craftsman & Wolves and fantabulous small batch chocolate next door at Dandelion Chocolate. Both of these gorgeous shops are in the Mission District on Valencia and walking distance from Bi-Rite Market, a truly wonderful specialty market that had more than 20 varieties of citrus fruit for sale."

The Bi-Rite Divisadero is a great example of what urban retailers can do to capture the hearts of neighborhood customers. Their website proudly proclaims that they serve their community with love, passion and integrity. Visiting the store demonstrates the promise is real.



Sofia's comments about the city's food scene were glowing as well, "Mostly, however, the San Francisco show is about the city and its dining establishments, including the Farmers' Market at the Ferry Building. There were huge queues for porchetta, stalls full of vibrantly coloured mandarins and clementines, cheeses galore."

I spent one morning at the Ferry Building going through a wish list of treats to bring back to my colleagues in Chicago that included: Blue Bottle coffee beans, apricot and plum blueberry conserve from Frog Hollow and McEvoy Ranch olive oil. Another great San Francisco experience for me was visiting the 24th Street Cheese Market that has been serving up specialty foods from near and far for over 30 years. The windows are covered with a mosaic of handwritten signs featuring everything from local honey from Berkeley to figs from Calabria. Their local and global cheese selection is exceptional and customers are warmly guided to the best choices for their taste. The manager, Ellen, is delighted to talk about how she curates all of the offerings for their well traveled clientele.

Stephanie Izard and Nancy Hopkins

Nancy Hopkins was an official trend spotter at the show. The panel of trend spotters comprised of top food media and personalities, carefully explored the show's thousands of products to determine the most promising trends of the coming year. The panel named chocolate teas, seaweed chips, and truffle ketchup as just a few of the products that were all part of a larger trend towards thoughtful indulgence.

The trends captured the creativity of specialty food producers, and the care they put into crafting exciting taste experiences, whether they are reinventing familiar products with unexpected flavors or opening an audience to lesser-known ingredients.

Sriracha, the fiery Thai chili sauce, was one of the biggest flavor trends – showing up in snacks, chocolates and jams. Mint has made a comeback as a popular flavor in a number of treats, reflecting a turn towards the revival of simple, familiar tastes. Snacks have evolved well past the common potato chip as the specialty

food industry continues to seek out and deliver exciting flavors and unexpected ingredients for more mindful snacking choices. In a similar move towards healthful consumption, consumers can also look forward to more low-sugar beverages – a surprising twist given the trend in recent years towards alternative sweeteners.

Nancy shared the panel's findings on this year's trends:

#### Sriracha's Homecoming

- The Jam Stand, Not Just Peachy, Sriracha Jam
- Hope Foods, Hope Hummus Organic Sriracha Hummus
- Simply Sprouted Way Better Snacks, Simply Spicy Sriracha Tortilla Chips
- The Popcorn Factory, Lite Works Popcorn! Sriracha



#### Crunch Time

- Vintage Italia, Pasta Chips, New Brands on the Shelf
- Simply 7, Quinoa Chips
- Simply Sprouted Way Better Snacks, Pitaahh Chips
- 479° Popcorn, Toasted Sesame + Seaweed Popcorn
- Rhythm Superfoods, Super Food Chips

#### Low-Sugar Sips

- Califia Farms, Pure Unsweetened Almond Milk
- Xumma, Xumma Semi Sweet Cola, New Brands on the Shelf
- Bruce Cost Ginger Ale, Bruce Cost Ginger Ale "66"
- Numi Organic Tea, Indulgent Tea, Chocolate Earl Grey
- Big Tree Farms, Coco Hydro

#### Commit to Mint

- Torn Ranch, Dark Chocolate Mint Mélange
- Silk Road Soda, Cucumber with Mint, New Brands on the Shelf
- GoodPop All-Natural Frozen Pops, Hibiscus Mint
- Seely Mint, Mint Patties
- Victoria's Kitchen, Mint & Licorice Almond Water

#### Condiments Dressed Up

- Victoria Amory, Fine Herbs Mayonnaise
- Stonewall Kitchen, Truffle Ketchup
- Fischer & Wieser, Salted Caramel Mustard Sauce
- Amoretti, Premium Organic Extra Virgin Olive Oil infused with Kalamata Olives
- Lillie's Q Barbeque Sauces & Rubs, Ivory

I brought back some implications for innovation teams at food manufacturers based on the products seen and consumer insight collected at the show. Here are my thoughts for food industry professionals:

**Feed More Than The Appetite** – consumers are interested in companies that make good things and make the world a better place.

**Small Batches and Hand Crafted** – small batches, hand crafted foods and boutique flavors continue to captivate retailers and consumers looking for the secret find.

**The Go-Anywhere Gourmet Experience** – consumers enjoy treating themselves to a gourmet experience even when they are on the go with flavorful, convenient snacks that can be tossed in a bag or a backpack.

**Flavors to Explore** – Greek is the world flavor on display this year. Greek yogurt has reached the point of ubiquity as a snack and an ingredient and now the broader cuisine of this country is getting more attention. There was also talk that Peruvian food may be the "new" ethnic flavor ripe for discovery.