

Food Ingredients Hit the Jackpot in Las Vegas



Photos by Oscar/Einzig Photography, Chicago



By Donald Washington

The world's most popular flavors and ingredients were on display and often on everyone's tongue, literally, in July at the 2004 IFT (Institute of Food Technologists) Annual Meeting and Food Expo in Las Vegas, NV.

Now in its 64th year, the IFT Food Expo featured presentations on the latest food products, along with familiar and exotic flavors and ingredients from U.S.

producers and from companies around the world. The three most prominent trends at this year's show were health and wellness ingredients, ethnic flavors and convenience and packaging.

One of the largest shows in the United States, IFT attracted 10,000 visitors and 6,864 exhibitors featuring a variety of items, including sugarless ice cream, coatings, candy, soy products, sauces, condiments and a bevy of low-carbohydrate products. Flavored coffees were also available for those who frequented casinos during the previous night and needed to perk up.

The show also featured nutraceutical ingredients such as antioxidants, proteins,

botanicals and other ingredients that are intended to enhance health and the immune system.

FAS and MIATCO, the Mid-America International Agri-Trade Council, a non-profit organization that promotes agricultural exports from the Midwest, recruited more than 80 international buyers to attend the show. The buyers traveled from seven countries in South America and Asia to seek out products and build business relationships.

Meeting Trade Service Needs

"This is the first year that FAS targeted the IFT Food Expo for its outreach efforts," said Timothy Powers, an outreach



specialist for FAS. FAS began this relationship with IFT because foreign traders requested it. "Buyers approached our offices abroad and asked for information

on the Expo and FAS assistance at the show," Powers said.

FAS staff assisted buyers before the show, in some cases working with travel

agencies and the Las Vegas hotels or acting as interpreters. A lounge on the show floor for international buyers was staffed by FAS. International buyers were able to use two offices for private meetings, and open areas for more informal meetings. FAS staff will continue to assist the buyers after they return home.

These buyers are likely to make a significant contribution to the overall sales from IFT. Ten buyers that FAS escorted to last year's IFT show in Chicago purchased between \$3 and \$5 million worth of products at the show or subsequently.

There are no hard estimates of on-site sales yet for this year's show, but if early reports are any indication of success, according to many attendees, the show was a hit.

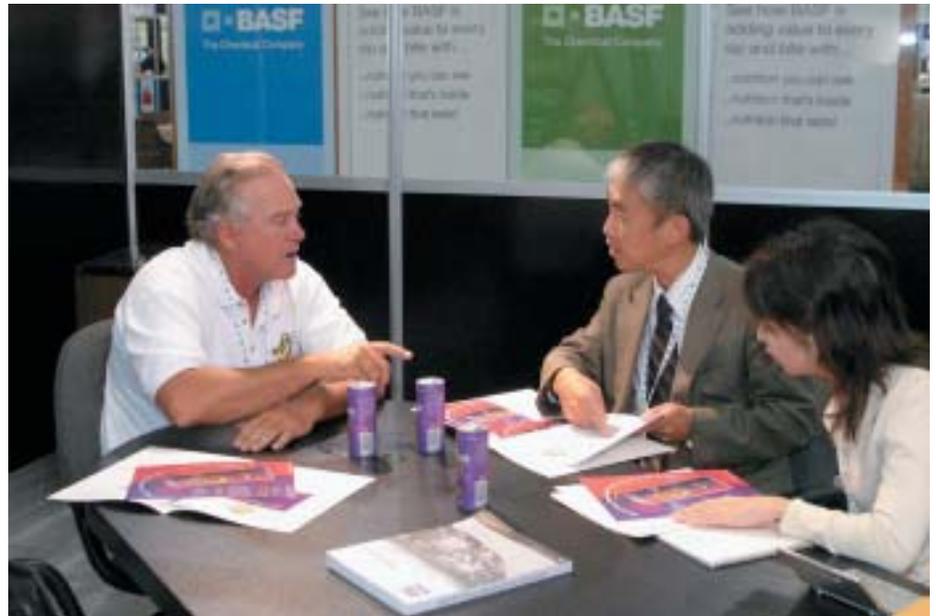
"This is the first IFT that I have attended, and I was very impressed with the size of the show, the number of exhibitors and the diversity of products," said Alan Di Stefano, director, Global

Trade and Investment for the state of Nevada. "I think that any company looking to source ingredients, or learn about new technologies, should make this a 'must attend' show in the future."

The two Nevada food companies exhibiting at IFT felt that the sales leads they got were very good and that sales will result from them in the future.

"I thought the international lounge on the exhibit floor was an excellent idea," Di Stefano said. "I used the lounge to meet with the leaders of the Philippine delegation and also used it for meetings between two Las Vegas companies and four buyers from Osaka, Japan. This worked extremely well for everyone involved."

"This was the first trip to the United States for several Indonesian buyers, although they already import some food ingredients from America," according to Fahwani Rangkuti, marketing specialist



with the FAS Office of Agricultural Affairs in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The Indonesian buyers met with exhibitors each morning and tried to visit

as many booths as possible to seek out suppliers from the United States.

According to Illeana Ramirez, marketing specialist with FAS' Office of Agricultural Affairs in Costa Rica, the buyers she accompanied to the show thought it was excellent and felt that they would attend again in the future.

The turnout at this year's show was a great success. "This is a reflection of the show itself and the positive attitude that foreign buyers and FAS offices abroad have about the show," said Powers.

Amid the bright lights, carnival-like atmosphere, big jackpots and floor shows of Las Vegas, the business of agricultural trade was done at IFT. ■



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