

Food Manufacturers Mix Shortcuts into New Products

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BY SUE ONTIVEROS Food Editor

Convenience once again was king at the Food Marketing Institute trade show, which ended Tuesday.

The trade extravaganza, which is not open to the public, is a showcase for new products and actually featured five trade shows in one -- FMI, the Fancy Food Show, the U.S. Food Export Showcase, Produce Expo & Conference and All Things Organic. Some of the products are just hitting store shelves while others will be rolled out in the next few months.

Food manufacturers continue to hear how consumers don't have much time yet still are faced with the daily dilemma of getting meals on the table.

Upscale Products Tough to Overlook

The Fancy Food Show showcases a lot of the smaller, upscale products that one finds in specialty grocers, although some do show up in mainstream supermarkets.

On the sweet side, key lime and raspberry continue to be popular flavors. Flavored olive oils and mustards were popular among savory offerings. One product bridged sweet and savory: East Shore has a Key Lime with ginger mustard!

Here are a few products we especially liked:

- Captain Rodney's pepper jelly has just the right mix of smoky hot and sweet. (The all-natural product can be found in select Jewel Food Stores.)
- Janis & Melani's cookies come in a number of flavors, but we especially liked the crisp lemon cookies.

- Chicago-based ComfortCake (www.comfortcake.com) has an excellent Sugarless™ Sweetness Luscious Lemon pound cake. They were a bit coy on the seasoning, but I doubt any diabetic would think he or she was missing something with this product.

- The Salad Meals from Sunshine Gardens (www.sunshinegourmet.com) offer four different varieties of shelf stable seasoned meat, such as its Caesar Style Grilled Chicken. Add them to salads or warm them up in the microwave for a minute or so and they can top pasta. This will be coming to Chicago later this spring and it's a real winner in terms of flavor and convenience.

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