



CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC

Top 10 Trends

Summer Fancy Foods Show

2024

The overall mood at this year's SFA - Summer Fancy Food Show at the Jacob Javits Convention Center (NYC) June 23-25 was cautiously optimistic. Very hard to dampen the energy/excitement of a food or beverage Founder. While all the booths were occupied and the attending crowd was solid, it didn't feel like a lot of new business (orders) were being written by large retailers. Exhibitor level of innovation was once again high. My top 10 list of major trends/takeaways coming out of the conference:

01

Some like it Hot

The number of challenger hot sauce brands continues to multiply almost exponentially. It seems to be a category with lots of catch-up innovation riding a wave of trying to make food more flavorful and interesting. My favorite picks:

- Hell's Kitchen: born on the West Side of Manhattan; if you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen
- African Dream Foods: purpose-driven products from Africa, giving back to wildlife conservation; great bottle form
- Wildly Delicious: Keepin' It Saucy since 1955
- Elijah's Xtreme: father and son handcrafted gourmet sauces - try the Beer Maple Bacon marinade & bbq sauce
- Black Mamba: wild flavors from Africa, crafted in Eswatini
- Melinda's: created by brothers Greg and David Figueroa using fresh ingredients
- Express Hot Sauce: where fresh ingredients are the hero; founders - former New Yorkers now living in Taiwan
- The General's Hot Sauce: launched in 2016, veteran-owned; vertical at Smoke House Foods facility; bottle form: hand grenade



02

Conference Buzz

The frenzy around honey right now is undeniable. Claims of gut health to natural candy abound. Hot honey is on fire, with chilies and sweets balancing out each other. The only question is how sticky this trend will turn out to be. I am not really seeing the science, and clearly, mass production will be challenging. Very interesting to see many are selling the honeycomb as well – chew on it and suck the honey off, then spit it out. Fun but messy. My top picks:

- Hive to Table Honey Farms: carries four lines – Kelley’s (Texas), Jamie’s (Premium), Fishers (mass), Zeigler’s (Georgia)
- Honey Blossom: authentic honey, all-natural, 100% pure honey
- Savannah Bee Company: hot honey & honey hot sauce; try the Scotch Bonnet Pepper flavor
- BeeNZ: Honey of New Zealand
- Dr. Bee: Prioritizes the hives’ well-being; focusing on all-natural, raw, and unpasteurized honey; British Columbia



03

Mocktail Madness

While the non-alc segment of the spirits industry is relatively small, the growth rate is here to stay. As more demand comes, the level of innovation rises, and entrepreneurs emerge. My favorite brands:

- Runamok: key ingredients are maple syrup and honey; try bourbon flavor
- Bluestem Botanicals: specializes in whole plant, certified organic herbal extracts; farm-crafted recipes; Doylestown, PA
- Cocktails in Hell: All-natural cocktail mixers; all-natural, premium priced – made in small batches
- Natural Blonde: Bloody Mary mix is the hero product
- Barcoop Bevy: all-natural cocktail mixers made with real ingredients; Charleston, S.C.; favorite flavor: Old Fashioned



04 Cool Condiments

This category has historically lacked innovation, apart from Sir Kensingtons (Ketchup), which sold to Unilever for \$140mm in April 2017. Some gutsy entrepreneurs are willing to nibble market share from Hellmans (mayo) and Heinz (ketchup). The brands I most enjoyed:

- Plochman's: fun flavored mustards - "the summer must-have mustard;" flavors include Honey, Champagne, Cuban style
- Woeber's Mustard: 1905 Carl Woeber - German immigrant to Springfield, Ohio; 4th generation family management today
- The Foraging Fox: all-natural range of mayonnaise in 6 unique flavors: avocado, truffle, miso; ketchup: using upcycled tomatoes



05 A Little Bit Spicy

Continuing on our theme of adding more flavor to our basic foods, a great number of interesting spice companies were on display at SFA. Most focused on all-natural ingredients and bringing out flavors. My top choices:

- Alchemy Spice Co: since 2003, handcrafting all-natural spice blends in Chattanooga, TN; good work showing best-sellers and new-release flavors
- African Dream: natural pepper sauces and seasonings from Africa; wildlife conservation gives back to their community
- Hoboken Farms: low sodium marinara sauce; magic comes from fresh Jersey tomatoes
- Nana's: all-purpose alkaline seasoning brings out natural flavors
- Old Bones Chilli Co.: launched in September 2021; family-owned chili sauce producer based in Texas
- Flatiron Pepper Co: "you'll never go back to red pepper flakes"
- Pereg: natural foods & spices since 1906; healthy, using natural superfoods



06 Plant Based Pavilion

This food philosophy has become so large and so mainstream that the movement was able to host its own "mini" conference. Featured were a wide variety of ice creams, canned veggies, snacks, etc. The full product line is represented. Beverage Pavilion was also hosting its own "mini" conference.

07

Extra Innovative Olive Oils

The craftpersonship behind olive oil making has not changed in 100s of years. Very little brand innovation has taken place until now. Many entrepreneurs now see the benefits of heart health. Greater acceptance in the US after becoming mainstream in Europe long ago. The up-and-comers in this category are:

- La Tourangelle: California and France; Extra Virgin Olive Oil; form factor: better in tin
- Dave's Gourmet: single estate grown - Extra Virgin Olive Oil and Chili Olive Oil - O.N.A.O.O certified; one single olive variety
- Saratoga Olive Oil Co.: collection of olive oils, balsamic, and gourmet condiments; freshness in every drop; wholesale as well
- Libellula: 100% Italian, Extra Virgin Olive Oil - family farmers; regenerative agriculture; based outside of Rome



08

PB&J

Again another large industry historically with a low innovation rate given the size and power of the large incumbents: Skippy and Smuckers. A few brave souls dared to create challenger brands that were bold and interesting. My favorites:

- Sweet Ella's: artisanal organic peanut butter manufactured by the Koeze Company (Grand Rapids, MI); key: slow-roasted Spanish peanuts
- Sarabeth's: jams and jellies - small batch recipes; star kosher certified, made in the USA; no pectin added; Tamaqua, PA
- Blake Hill: preserves maker - sweet, savory and spicy; jambassadors help with 80+ flavors; new - no cane sugar chocolate spread
- Braswell's: sauces, jellies, jams - Since 1946



09

United Nations of Foods

Interesting to see so many different countries organize mini zones within the conference to showcase all of their country's leading challenger F&B brands. These highly coordinated worlds within the SFA are there to draw interest in the home country and further exports to the US. Countries pushing the hardest:

- Largest real estate: Peru (Super Foods), Canada, Country of Georgia
- Medium-sized presence: Portugal, China, Thailand
- Modest push: Africa (spread out), Korea, India

10

Snacks

Always a fun category and one that often produces innovation by praying upon more than willing consumers searching for their sugar fix. Best brands:

- Matzo Project: Matzo Chips - baked but not fried; thoughtfully sourced ingredients, crafted in small batches by charming people
- Rind Remix: key ingredient fruit rinds; gives back through Love is Rind; favorite flavor is Cherry Cashew Crunch - granola snack mix
- Popzup: popped-by-hand popcorn with love, pure and simple ingredients, 8-month shelf life; eco-friendly packaging; recycling program



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