

AFFI SPONSORS *PRODUCE FIRST! AMERICAN MENUS INITIATIVE*

On January 20, 2008, the American Frozen Food Institute (AFFI) served as sponsor of the third annual *Produce First! American Menus Initiative*. The *Produce First!* event, held at the Culinary Institute of America's Greystone Campus in Napa Valley, California, is the result of collaboration between the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) and Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH). The initiative is designed to spark the imagination of chefs and foodservice operators in bringing increased amounts of produce to new menu development.

In addition to serving as event sponsor, AFFI member companies donated frozen fruits and vegetables for use by CIA instructors and participating chefs. Other organizations sponsoring the event included the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, California Raisin Marketing Board, California Strawberry Commission, American Iron & Steel Institute's Steel Packaging Council, Chilean Fresh Fruit Association, Del Monte Fresh Produce, Gilroy Foods, Grimmway Farms, Hass Avocado Board, National Mango Board, National Peanut Board, Nunhems (sponsoring Grimmway and River Point Farms), Perfect Puree of Napa Valley, River Point Farms, Sunkist Growers, U.S. Foodservice, and U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council.

The day began with introductions and an overview of the program's objectives, as well as presentations by foodservice, industry and health professionals on the value of increased consumption of fruits and vegetables in the fight against obesity and chronic disease.

The program's six objectives were to:

1. Inspire chefs with knowledge – and direct tasting experience – that there is a vast repertoire of produce-based world cuisine recipes, flavor strategies, and techniques that are “on-trend” with changing consumer taste preferences (toward embracing more culinary adventure);
2. Share ideas and best practices among chefs about what has worked in increasing produce-based menu items across all day and meal parts in various sectors of the industry;
3. Educate chefs about flavor and health strategies for pairing produce with other foods from throughout the MyPyramid food guide to help their customers meet the dietary guidelines;
4. Spend time in the CIA teaching kitchens in a hands-on market basket format to allow chefs to think creatively about how to work with produce in a way that they may not have time to in their own operations – and share the results with their peers;
5. Brainstorm in a forum setting about initiatives that can be fostered in the foodservice industry to raise awareness and appeal of produce-based menu items, and lay the foundation for subsequent action; and
6. Give the American produce industry feedback on ways they can best support the efforts within the food service industry to increase produce consumption.

Presenters included Dr. Elizabeth Pivonka, President and CEO of the Produce for Better Health Foundation, who emphasized the nutritional value of *all* forms of fruits and vegetables. Dr.

Pivonka suggested that frozen, canned and dried products can be used to increase the amount of fruits and vegetables chefs and foodservice operators serve their customers.

Immediately following the morning presentations, CIA instructors demonstrated simple techniques for incorporating produce into recipes, and also created entire meals featuring fruits and vegetables. Presenters included experts in Mediterranean, Latin, Thai and Mexican cuisines. Chef Adam Busby, one of only 62 certified master chefs in the United States, prepared a cod and vegetable dish “*en papillote*” (in parchment paper) using only frozen vegetables.

The highlight of the day was the “Produce First Market Basket Experience” led by guest chefs and faculty of the CIA. Participating foodservice professionals were divided into five teams, each paired with three to four representatives from sponsoring organizations, and assigned a specific protein with which to work. The challenge was to design and prepare a four-course meal (appetizer, salad, main course, and one side dish) with a focus on *produce first*.

Participants were required to incorporate one or more of the sponsor products assigned to their team into every menu item using as little sodium and saturated fat as possible. AFFI was part of the Southeast Asia/India team led by CIA faculty member Lars Kronmark and cuisine expert Suvir Saran. After a group discussion, the team settled upon four dishes and an *amuse-bouche* (mouth amuser, or a bite-sized morsel served before the hors d'oeuvre or first course of a meal) featuring frozen green beans, corn, tomatoes, cauliflower, asparagus, blueberries and peaches donated by AFFI member companies, as well as products donated by the California Raisin Marketing Board and Sunkist Growers.

AFFI member companies providing frozen produce for the CIA-hosted event including:

Cebro Frozen Foods, Inc.
Grimmway Farms
Inn Foods
Jasper Wyman & Son
National Frozen Foods Corporation
Patterson Frozen Foods
The Pictsweet Company
Wawona Frozen Foods

After several hours of preparation and cooking in the CIA test kitchens, Team Southeast Asia/India presented its culinary creations to the event delegates and guests. The team lineup included:

- Cauliflower Cappuccino Shooter (featuring frozen cauliflower)
- Carrot Kachumbar with Raisins (including frozen asparagus)
- Lentil Vada (featuring frozen corn)
- Lemon Zest Quinoa in Lettuce Wrap
- Indian Purple Carrot Relish

- Tandoori Shrimp, Green Bean Puriyak with Leek Shoestrings (including frozen green beans)

Members of the four additional teams also incorporated frozen fruits and vegetables in their respective culinary creations. Team Latin America made use of frozen corn and peaches, Team Mediterranean incorporated frozen tomatoes and blueberries, and the other two teams added at least one frozen product in their dishes.

“We were pleased to participate in this important event,” said AFFI Vice President of Public and Government Affairs Jorge Martinez. “Frozen fruits and vegetables provide a combination of great taste, nutrition, and year-round availability. The CIA chefs capitalized on the growing appetite for global cuisines, and produced an incredible lineup of delicious and nutritious possibilities using our member companies’ frozen fruits and vegetables.”

Martinez was joined in the event by Elise Cortina, AFFI’s director of public and industry affairs.

“This event presented us with an incredible opportunity to showcase the versatility and wonderful flavor frozen fruits and vegetables bring to the kitchen,” said AFFI President and Chief Executive Officer Leslie G. Sarasin. “Ultimately, the consumer will benefit from this increased attention to fruits and vegetables and reduced fat in meal planning and preparation. I encourage foodservice professionals to continue exploring new ways to prepare healthier dishes.”

ABOUT THE AMERICAN FROZEN FOOD INSTITUTE

The American Frozen Food Institute is the national trade association that promotes and represents the interests of all segments of the frozen food industry. The Institute fosters industry development and growth, advocates on behalf of the industry before legislative and regulatory entities, and provides additional value-added services for its members and for the benefit of consumers. For more information, please visit the website at www.affi.com.

ABOUT THE PRODUCE FOR BETTER HEALTH FOUNDATION

Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) consumer education foundation whose purpose is to motivate people to eat more fruits and vegetables to improve public health. The foundation is responsible for a variety of nutrition education and marketing programs, including the new Fruits & Veggies – More Matters™ health initiative. PBH also achieves success through nutrition policy efforts and industry and government collaboration. PBH is chair of the National Fruit & Vegetable Program, consisting of government agencies, non-profit organizations, and industry working in collaboration to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables for improved public health. The Fruits & Veggies – More Matters™ program is the nation’s largest public-private nutrition education initiative.

ABOUT THE CULINARY INSTITUTE OF AMERICA AT GREYSTONE

Nestled in the heart of the Napa Valley, just two hours north of San Francisco, is the Culinary Institute of America’s West Coast campus. Since 1995, the CIA at Greystone has provided continuing education opportunities and career development programs for food, wine and hospitality. Today, the California campus is expanding its services to include food industry business solutions, such as custom programs and research and development consultation. Educational courses, ranging from foundation and advanced studies to culinary arts degree and certificate programs, supply training in the culinary arts, baking and pastry arts, foodservice management and professional wine development. Along with superior facilities, a renowned

faculty and a vast selection of innovative year-round programs, Greystone hosts public cooking demonstrations, special events, seminars and travel programs. The annual Worlds of Flavor Seminar and Conference attracts over 600 industry specialists each year.