

Reflections

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A warm October Saturday at the Alamo: newlyweds pose for pictures as AACC International attendees calmly stroll under the oak trees that shade this early 19th century battlefield. This year, San Antonio hosted AACC International's Annual Meeting (Oct. 7–10). Many non-American attendees expressed surprise to learn that Texas once existed as a proud and independent nation with its own vivid history. Yes, the Anglo and Mexican defenders of

the Alamo lost their battle and their lives. But, in losing, they set the cornerstone for a proud “can do” Texas tradition.

Bad news sometimes portends good news as history's river runs its course. Perhaps the lesson is not to fear the bad news but to embrace the possibilities engendered. If, in the foreseeable future, the cereal foods industry faces turbulent times, how can we gain?

This year, the Canadians, Australians, and the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium), to cite just a few of the international contingents, were again present in force, contributing challenging insights and perspectives on cereal technology, nutrition, and consumer trends. Drought in Australia and the surging price of corn and wheat weighed on peoples' minds. Pretty much any issue was there for the taking. Have doubts about the glycemic index? Then strike up a hallway conversation with Australia's David Topping to properly frame the issue. Need creative applications for exotic grains? Then listen to chef Charlie Baggs expound on the application of amaranth, quinoa, and even oats in the breads, rolls, sopas, empanadas, pastas, and oat beverages and desserts that grace Latin American cuisine. At the ever-popular Student Division Product Development Competition, you had to cheer as Team Manitoba took the prize. And, if you need good company to finish the day, the gentlemen of Caravan run a great entertainment suite. Thanks, guys! Here's more:

Biofuels and grain-price volatility are here to stay: that's the take from a dynamic presentation by U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Under Secretary Thomas Dorr. However, according to Dorr, rapid rises in grain prices are only partially attributable to ethanol demand—a bigger factor is the rapid rise in global consumer incomes, which boost demand for meat products and thus animal feeds. Dorr predicted only modest, subinflationary rises in U.S. food prices due to ethanol demand together with net increases in projected U.S. grain exports through 2016. If so, that's good news.

As expected, health and nutrition predominated in lively discussions at the many technical and “hallway” sessions. Also interesting was a discussion on a continuous, in-line nuclear magnetic resonance analysis system. Dietary fiber and whole grain definitions still percolate as discussion topics but I sense they may (finally) be drawing to a close. Gluten free is definitely the trend to watch. I was told (wink, wink!) that major cereal products companies the world over are already investing heavily in this category. If so, that's great news for exotic grains, said others. A lively, well-attended discussion on sodium reduction noted that it's not that bakery and other cereal products are high in salt so much as it's their high level of consumption that is at issue.

Biofuels, dietary fiber, sodium, whole and exotic grains...I can't quite put my finger on it, but, somehow, I sensed that this year's annual meeting signaled the tipping points for so many of the issues that we have wrestled with to date. These are just some of the reasons why the annual meetings are so important.

And now for something completely different...

Tonight, on the same day that I put my final flourish to this editorial, I will attend the retirement party of Roy Hlavacek, publisher of the Institute of Food Technologist's flagship publication *Food Technology*. Trade and professional publications play a crucially important role in how we convey and manage information in our industry. To this end, Roy stayed true to his mission: he remains a true gentleman, a worthy competitor, and a professional who helped keep the standards of our industry very high. My hat is off to him and my parting words will be, “Well done!”

So, this presents a particularly auspicious time for me to announce my own retirement as executive editor of CEREAL FOODS WORLD. For 18 months, we worked to enhance the look, tone, and content of this flagship publication to better meet the needs of our members. Only you can judge whether we succeeded in our mission, but I hope that, at minimum, we have kept it interesting for you. It's been a good run, but, as my own river runs its course, it is now time for me to devote my full attention to my own business, Best Vantage Inc. In parting, I would like to thank each and every one of you for your attention to and continuing support of CEREAL FOODS WORLD and AACC International, two great institutions that set, and will continue to set, high standards for our global industry.

Next year, AACC International will meet once again to fertilize, germinate, cross-pollinate, and harvest new ideas, tools, and solutions that move our industry forward. Next year...aloha Honolulu!

‘Till we meet again, cheers!