



Cactus Section
Institute of Food Technologists

A professional group of IFT members in Arizona seeking to advance the science and technology of food through exchange of knowledge

A Quarterly Newsletter

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Two Ways to Truly Benefit from Suppliers' Night

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Two Ways to Truly Benefit from Suppliers' Night

This year's Cactus Section IFT Suppliers' Night provides you with the unique opportunity to meet face to face with fellow professionals in the food, beverage, and nutraceutical industries. Suppliers come to show the services, ingredients, or equipment they can offer to companies or consultants with the hope of creating a business partnership and generating revenue.

But Suppliers' Night is meant to be much more than a sales pitch. To truly benefit from this event, there are two things you should try to do. First, network with the intent of building genuine relationships. Secondly, learn something new.

When networking at Suppliers' Night, focus on building authentic relationships that are more than just a handshake and an exchange of business cards. As the CEO of Zappos, Tony Hsieh, encourages in an article for the *Huffington Post*, avoid networking in the traditional sense and, "instead try to build up the number and depth of your friendships, where the friendship itself is its own reward."



Networking is about connecting and building relationships.

Credit: Flickr

Don't be mistaken though; making connections with people could greatly benefit your business. However, the foundation of trust and commitment through a friendship can make all the difference when working on business matters. You never know how the relationship you built could lead to future endeavors and partnerships.

Also, keep an open mind about the connections you make by getting to know people that might not be in your direct line of business. It's a good way to gain different insights and new perspectives. More importantly, don't forget to follow up and maintain the relationships you invested your time into building.

Suppliers' Night is also an opportunity to learn something new. As you make your rounds visiting with people and looking for solutions, keep an eye out for new products, services, or new ways of doing things. This is the time to ask questions directly to industry experts. If you see an ingredient or service that's new to you or catches your attention (even if it's not related to your work), make the effort to learn about it. It may just provide you with new insight for future projects or products.

Having an open mind at Suppliers' Night allows you to build new relationships and learn new concepts, both of which can support your business. At this year's Suppliers' Night, make a conscious effort to build genuine friendships and learn new things.

-Quchat Shekarri, Cactus Section Secretary-Elect

Busting Myths About the Food Industry



John Ruff

The food industry, processing, GMOs, artificial ingredients, globalization, oh my!

It's hard to blame consumers for believing in myths about food. They are blinded with all the choices vying for attention at the supermarket and schizophrenic news headlines that muddy the water about what's healthy and what's not.

It's the age of the "empowered, global consumer," said John Ruff, immediate past president of IFT, speaking to the Cactus IFT Section on Feb. 4 in Tempe, Ariz. The Internet, social media, and quick communication at our fingertips gives the average consumer the ability to be more informed than ever before.

But there's also a lot of misinformation that's accessed often openly attacking food science and technology due to a general lack of understanding, he explained.

Myth #1: Food processing is new

The No. 1 myth is that food processing is a relatively new occurrence, Ruff said. "Some people might say that it's only 50 years old. Some people say it's 100 years old. Wrong answer. Food processing is at least a half a million years old."

About half a million years ago humans first discovered the use of fire for cooking, Ruff says. That marks the birth of food processing and food science. That first use of fire must've been as foreign as any other type of food processing that came later.

"How it happened, who knows?" Ruff said. "Maybe some animal got too close and fell into the fire or maybe an ancestor killed an animal and threw it in the fire. But that particular ancestor picked the leg of whatever it was out and suddenly discovered that that meat was now tastier, easier to digest, more nutritious, and better for them."

The advent of cooking in the Paleolithic era was followed by many other types of processing in the late Mesolithic and early Neolithic eras—around the same time of the arrival of subsistence agriculture—including drying, milling, and fermenting. Pickling and curing would come later, near the Middle Ages, and finally all the technologies of the industrial revolution that included canning, plant breeding, pasteurization, blast freezing, aseptic packaging, and the list goes on.

Myth #2: GMOs are new and unnatural

One of the most recent food developments of the present day is the technology to genetically modify crops, which brings us to myth #2—that GMOs are something new and unnatural. "GMOs are as old as crop cultivation. The birds and the bees did it 10,000 years ago," Ruff said.

Ruff explained further that we've been deliberately modifying crops ever since George Mendel taught how inheritance of traits and pea plants worked. In fact, the understanding of genetics is what led Norman Borlaug to father the Green Revolution with his high-yielding wheat, which saved millions of lives in India, Africa, and Mexico.

So when it comes to modifying plants genetically, "nothing is new," Ruff said. We just have advanced technologies that help us to do it more easily.

Myth #3: Bias doesn't exist in research

Another myth Ruff tackled is that bias doesn't exist when research is *not* funded by the food industry. It certainly is, and he presented several examples—borrowing mainly from work by David Allison and others—where "white hat bias" had crept into scientific literature.

In some studies relating to sugar, for example, there were several instances of emotion-based language that drew conclusions from causation about food based on animal or cell studies. Worse still, some of the conclusions about causation were purely based on correlations found in epidemiological studies.

With this type of bias, it's no surprise that we get the headlines that we do. And it explains why consumers become confused so easily.

Myth #4: Globalization isn't a good thing

In a small world where communication happens in an instant thanks to information technology, consumers often might not appreciate how complex the supply chain of food might be.

For instance, Ruff says, a simple cheeseburger could have ingredients—the wheat bun, tomatoes, beef, and sauce—from several different countries including Australia, Canada, Uruguay, Belgium, the UK, Chile, Morocco, and Spain.

Information technology is also allowing us to make improvements to the food system by helping us to more quickly respond to consumer demands and food insecurity all over the world.

Myth #5: Processed food can't be good for you

One other widely disseminated belief is that processed food can't be good for you, but this is yet another mischaracterization. Even fast food can be healthy, Ruff says.

In fact, in 2012, a review paper published in *The Journal of Nutrition* determined that the processing level of foods was actually only a minor determinant of the individual food's nutrient contribution to diet.

So, the authors argued, processed foods should not be overlooked and did have an important nutritional role for consumers. But that might not be enough of a convincing argument for consumers, who seem to love to hate food technology and science. Because of rising mistrust of food science and technology, Ruff says IFT is calling for its members to speak out about their industry.

"The future of our profession is at stake here," Ruff said. "If we don't get people to understand what food science has done in the past, what it's doing today, and how critical it is to feed the world in the future; if we're going to feed 9 billion people by 2050, we cannot afford to say, be a Luddite and throw away food technology and food science."

- David Despain, MS, Cactus Section IFT Newsletter Committee Chair

Member Spotlight:

Holly Long



Holly Long, Cactus Section IFT Chair

This year would not have been successful without the hard work and dedication of the Cactus Section IFT Chair, Holly Long.

Holly has spent hours scheduling events and organizing meetings. Here are some questions we asked her:

When did you join IFT?

I first joined IFT as a student at the University of Arizona in the late 1980s. I returned to Arizona 6 years ago and I have been actively involved in the Cactus Section IFT for 4 years. I came to an open board meeting just to see what was going on and left with the job of secretary. That pulled me right in and I have found it very rewarding to be involved.

Can you tell us about your role as the Cactus Section IFT Chair?

Being Chair has been a challenge for me and I still have much to learn! At the same time, I have truly benefited from the training offered by IFT and have been able to sharpen my leadership skills. One of the best things for me has been developing friendships. I have also enjoyed working with volunteers and feeling such a great sense of appreciation for their help in seeing things through. As Chair, I have enjoyed seeing events come together, getting to know more of the members, and working on building my own skill sets. I am grateful for the opportunity!

What do you do professionally?

I have been involved in the nutritional supplement industry for over 20 years. I started out as a new graduate with a Master's in Food Science from Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. At that time, the nutritional supplement industry was not seen as a valid industry by the scientific community in general. Being involved in IFT helped me stay in touch with the science community. Over time more and more scientists became involved in the nutritional supplement industry and now there are many at any given event. It has been a wonderful change for our industry. Six years ago, I shifted focus in my career and am now involved in the business side of the industry managing a web fulfillment group. Being involved with IFT helps me keep in touch with the science that I love and meet other great professionals.

Why do you stay involved in IFT?

Among other reasons mentioned, one of my main reasons for staying involved is a love of science and learning. My favorite events are those where we learn together from great presenters and/or industry tours.

If you had to choose, what has been your favorite IFT event? Why?

One of my favorite IFT events in the last few years was a presentation on food safety and recall processes. It was unrelated to my current position, but the speaker knew the material well and taught and entertained us at the same time. A good teacher can always engage an audience!

Do you enjoy any hobbies? If so, what?

My husband and I enjoy working together on self sufficiency activities that could be loosely grouped under the idea of an urban farm. I enjoy having fruit trees, gardening, and cooking with my sun oven. The empowerment I felt when I cooked my first meal in the sun oven is hard to describe.

What would you eat for your last meal?

I love many kinds of food and my favorites change often. I have a recipe called "Tomoatoey Chickpeas" that comes to mind at this moment. It's garbanzo beans flavored with Indian spices over rice. Pot stickers sounds good today too. And then a rich decadent dessert, perhaps.

Give Networking A Chance

To some, the thought of entering a room filled with strangers all with an eager intent to shake hands and exchange business cards can be daunting. The intimidating atmosphere can make you feel uneasy, unworthy, and unknowledgeable.

For these reasons, many people avoid the opportunity to network with professionals in their fields. Donna Cook is a published author who has expressed her hesitation to engage in networking in a recent article on her blog titled, "Why Networking is Not the Dirty Word I Thought it Was." (Visit Donna Cook's blog at www.donnacookauthor.com or read her book, *Gift of the Phoenix*.)

She describes her preconceived notion of what a networking event would entail: "I envisioned a bunch of well-dressed folks whipping out their business cards with a suave smile. I imagined a flow of conversation that persuaded everyone listening [to] 'Do business with ME'. It seemed exactly the sort of slick, conniving environment in which I would be doomed to fail."

Although reluctant, she decided to attend an event for the Idaho Writer's Guild—an organization that would help support her latest journalism endeavor. With flashbacks to her "I'm-the-new-kid-in-school-and-don't-know-where-to-sit-in-the-cafeteria" days, she bee-lined to an open seat and sunk into her chair.

Slowly, she opened herself up to those sitting around her and became pleasantly surprised at the commonalities she shared with them. As Cook put it, they all "spoke the same language." She was intrigued by their personal stories and inspired by their accomplishments. In fact, she was so moved by the people she met, she decided to join the club and has been a member ever since.

Cook professes the professional benefits of networking, but believes the personal friendships are what keep her coming back for more. "...I love the group. I love the people in it. I love being a part of it," she concludes in her article.

Similar to Cook's realization, Cactus Section IFT offers a unique opportunity to meet people who have similar interests in food science. One of the purposes of the section is to provide an opportunity to network regarding professional goals as well as to build lasting relationships outside of the section. At Cactus Section IFT, it's more than networking; it's about connecting.

- Gilleen Barkyoumb, MS, RD, Cactus Section IFT member

Important Contacts

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Mark your calendars!

- Suppliers' Night on April 1 at El Zaribah Shrine in Phoenix, Arizona.
- You won't want to miss the IFT Annual Meeting and Food Expo in June!



Credit: Flickr/Sean MacEntee

"Like" Us!

The Cactus Section IFT is now on Facebook! Be sure to "like" our page to stay up-to-date on the latest news and upcoming events. (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Cactus-Section-Institute-of-Food-Technologists>)

Other ways you can stay in touch with the happenings of Cactus Section IFT:

- Visit our website: www.cactusift.org
- Follow us on Twitter @CactusIFT
- Connect with us on LinkedIn by searching for Cactus Regional Section Institute of Food Technologists (IFT)
- Read our blog at www.cactusift.org/blog
- Email CactusIFT@gmail.com if you have any questions or concerns

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