



WASHINGTON RED RASPBERRY COMMISSION NEWS

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Institute of Food Technologists Conference

By Tom Krugman, WRRC Development Coordinator

The IFT Annual Meeting & Food Expo in New Orleans provided an opportunity to: 1) dialog with food manufacturers, ingredient suppliers, product R&D professionals, and food processors regarding future prospects for increasing demand for processed raspberries; and 2) benchmark the status of processed raspberry nutritional research and messaging against other commodity organizations.

Discussions with exhibitors can generally be summarized as falling into one of the following areas:

Traditional fruits versus Exotic Superfruits

While there was a consensus that superfruits have found a place in the American diet, there was also a consensus that they are much more of an unknown in terms of supply (commercial production is just starting and is not well understood) and nutritional benefits (research is in its infancy stage but developing rapidly).

Superfruits have an undeniable appeal as manufacturers search for the latest food as medicine. As attractive as some of these fruits are to manufacturers looking to differentiate their products and offer the latest health benefits, raspberries, blueberries, and strawberries, and cranberries will be a mainstay in product formulation. Cited as reasons for this conclusion are:

- They are commercially produced and processed. Their cultural practices have been researched and are understood by growers.
- They are in demand by consumers who enjoy their flavor; they are perceived to deliver nutritional benefits.
- They are widely available from international and domestic sources and are competitively priced. Manufacturers saw no qualitative difference regardless of source other than supply or price.

Fruit as an Ingredient

As expected, raspberries were found in trail mixes (including energy and nutrition bars), mixed juices (clarified and whole fruit blends), as an ingredient in energy drinks, dairy products (yogurt and ice cream), as an infused product, and baked goods (scones, cakes, cookies). Clear juices generally included the manufacturer's proprietary nutrition supplement, often an extract of a superfruit, to improve nutritional benefit. Many of these products had off-flavors that will limit their acceptance regardless of perceived nutritional benefits. There was an expectation that current products would continue to use processed raspberries, either by themselves or blended with other fruits to create different acceptable flavor profiles and expanded nutritional benefits.

Nutrition Magic

There is no one silver bullet when it comes to enhancing health through consumption of functional foods. It is generally understood by consumers that fruit and vegetable consumption contributes to living a more healthy life. They are often saturated by this media message to

the point of confusion.

With many foods touting their nutritional and health benefits, consumers

are overloaded. Is the trend going full circle? Twenty years ago, it was enough to say a product was good for you. Then consumers wanted to know why. Now there is a built-in expectation that their foods will have healthy attributes. Repeated by more than one manufacturer and reported as a growing trend during the 2nd International Symposium on Human Health Effects of Fruits and Vegetables last year, as consumers begin the process of improving their nutritional intake for health reasons, they are also looking for "cosmeceutical" foods, with foods that will help their skin age more gracefully in high demand. One manufacturer cited research showing that the appearance of wrinkles and fine lines are U.S. women's top body concerns, with 58% of them believing antioxidants can provide skin health benefits.

Recipes @ www.raspberryyinfo.com



Raspberry R&P

Manufacturers and processors generally responded favorably to the concept of a raspberry R&P, with responses running the gamut from, "a program similar to blueberries?" to "anything that can provide more nutrition information will help grow your market". There was support for science rather than anecdotal evidence as the basis for long-term market development programs to positively impact the quality of people's lives. Processors thought it sound strategy to work with international suppliers to build the domestic market. More than one thought imports already held a majority of the market.

The Future

Raspberries are at the right place at the right time. While there is no doubt that to take the steps that have been taken in the last twenty-four months 5 years ago would position the industry that much farther along the curve, the fact that the industry is moving forward aggressively was viewed favorably by exhibitors.

Three conclusions in favor of raspberries drawn after last year's IFT Expo remain relevant today:

1. There is continued interest in more raspberry nutrition research and how they contribute to overall wellness.
2. To effectively reach this audience, copies of nutrition research papers, samples of prepared foods featuring raspberries, and knowledgeable experts (chefs and food scientists) able to discuss raspberries are necessary.
3. Scientific presentations and poster sessions can draw an audience eager to learn more about raspberries.

Washington Red Raspberry

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*Promotion, Fair Trade,
and Research assistance
for Growers*

News Notes

WRRC Awaits Referendum for National Research and Promotion Program

Raspberry growers in the US and international growers exporting to the US await a decision by USDA to conduct a referendum to create a United States Red Raspberry Council (USRRC). This application is being studied by the USDA who intends to solicit comments this fall leading towards a nation-wide referendum in early 2008.

The WRRC believes the creation of a strong national organization to promote raspberries is long overdue. The USRRC will provide raspberry growers an opportunity to invest many more dollars in market development and advertising than what has been possible with the limited budgets of the state berry commissions. We encourage your active involvement in the campaign to inform growers of the potential of the USRRC. We will have this issue prominent on our agendas in the meetings this fall and spring.

Notes From Communications Committee Chair Darryl Ehlers

Tests of new varieties are on going at Honcoops and Sakumas under the guidance of WSU plant breeder Pat Moore. The Ehlers Farm is conducting tests of Canadian varieties. A progress report is coming in the fall for all those who could not make the July 23rd open house.

You can expect a holding of the high Raspberry prices for another year in part because of mite problems and new cane growth depression. Lets get it together boys! Darryl

Nominations for WRRC Board Recruited

Nominations for upcoming board positions will be received by the WA Dept. of Agriculture in September. They will be contacting you to announce the nominating procedure. It is time for those of you in Districts #3 (Clark, Cowlitz) and #1 (Whatcom) to be thinking about who you want to represent you. Terms are expiring for Erin Thoeny, Darryl Ehlers, and John Vander Veen. Both Erin and Darryl are prohibited from re-election as they have served 2 three year terms. Their work has been much appreciated by their fellow board members. John is eligible to be nominated for another term. We also have vacant seats in the SW WA, Puget Sound, and Olympic Peninsula districts.

Publicity Program Yields Results

The WRRC is pleased to report that the significant investments that you are making in promotions is paying off. The new health focused website at <http://www.raspberryinfo.com> serves as the information base for efforts in television, magazines, newspapers, and with the foodservice industry. The WRRC has learned from the lessons provided by other berries and fruits which is to develop a strong message featuring healthy and tasty fruit and use efficient communication channels to convey this message to both consumers and the food products industry. There is no question that raspberry demand is growing and that this demand has some effect on the recent price increases that growers are enjoying.

Innovation/Technology

The Specialty Crop Research Team organized a workshop in the Tri-Cities in late July to advance discussion of innovation and technology in specialty crops. Our partners in this effort are the citrus, tree fruit, grape, nursery, and vegetable growers around the nation and world. The workshop also had numerous equipment and information technology businesses in attendance including John Deere, IBM, Vision Robotics, and Toro. It was encouraging to see renewed interest by numerous universities in reenergizing their technology research and development departments. This is in part due to the concerns over labor shortages and costs and in large part stimulated by significant increases in available funding from the federal government through the recent Farm Bill. The WRRC is actively participating in these discussions and planning more opportunities for our growers to participate in them as well.

Production Reports Due

The Grower and Processor Report Forms are being mailed along with this newsletter. The State Auditor has been critical of the low percentage of these forms that have been returned. Only YOU can help address that concern. Please return your completed form to insure you are properly credited for your assessment dollars.

Calendar

Contact the WRRC office for information on each of these upcoming educational opportunities

- September 10 - WRRC Board Meeting, 1 pm - *WSU Mt. Vernon*
- October 29 - WRRC Board Meeting, 1 pm - *19th St. Fire Hall, Lynden*
- December 4 - Small Fruit Center Conference - *Corvallis, OR*
- December 8-9 - North American Berry Conference - *Grand Rapids, MI*
- December 15-17 (*tentative*) - WSU Small Fruit Workshop, WRRC Bd. Mtg. *Lynden*