



Bring the New Year In

There's nothing like the clean slate of a new year. A whole 12 months in front of you to envision, create and follow through on new products, trends and emerging technologies.

Halfway through the first decade of this century, we saw a number of trends come and go, then come back again. Hats off to the bold souls who started the love affair with lime this past year. I can't count the number of people who have mentioned to me that they're nuts over Miss Vickie's Lime and Black Pepper potato chips. Remember the non-stop hype over oat bran? Then calcium-fortified everything? Who would have thought to add extra calcium to milk? What about the latest deflated craze for carbohydrate reduced products – from Hall's Cough Drops to pasta? I mean really, how many carbs can you have in a single cough drop?

Dana McCauley, at the behest of Dempster's WholeGrains, put together a list of healthy eating trends for 2005. The trend toward healthy eating has been gaining momentum for the last five years, but with the growing concern over obesity, trans fats and an increasingly educated and vocal consumer, it has fully come top of mind.

McCauley, a Canadian cookbook author and food editor, says, "As a food expert I've often noted the chasm between the intentions consumers have to eat better and take care of their bodies and their day-to-day actions. Recent research reveals that this gap has begun to narrow at last. Consumers are not only embracing their health by buying foods that contain more complex carbohydrates and fewer trans fats, but they're making the switch in droves."

Among the trends she sees ascending are whole grains, whole foods, blueberries, pomegranate, enhanced milk, grilling, ready-to-use fresh cut produce, lower fat cheeses and toasted sandwiches. On the way out are low-carb, breading and deep-frying, high fat cheese, trans fats, canned vegetables, super-sized portions, donuts and white sugar.

If I could be so bold, I might add a couple of other thoughts to the mix. The organic sector is still growing and all signs point to an increasing demand for produce, meats and processed foods to carry that designation. The flavours of Spain dominate the top-of-line gourmet foodie publications and product specific origins, such as plantation specific coffees and chocolate, have appeared on the radar screen. Fair trade policies, while not a mainstream issue, are also gathering steam.



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The new year is also a time to reflect on challenges and issues that collectively affect the entire food industry spectrum. Top of mind are animal diseases that impact across various sectors, adopting new technologies such as RFID, the complicated dance our industry has with various government departments and agencies and making a buck in this tough old world. 2005 – I say, "Bring it on."

We've changed the focus of our Marketline column to incorporate aspects of the retail market that are relevant to our audience. Retail Scene will be written by our assistant editor, Deanna Rosolen. Food in Canada would also like to thank Jennifer Young, plus Jenna and Holly Whitnall, who actually did some work for us on Take your kids to Work Day last November. They helped fact-check a portion of our 2005 Guide Book.

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