

RESEARCH CHEFS IN CANADA

June 2006



Culinology and the RCA
Spotlight on Canadian chefs
Feeding Young Minds





RESEARCH CHEFS: BLENDING THE CULINARY ARTS AND THE SCIENCE OF FOOD

PRESENTING A SPECIAL ONE DAY SYMPOSIUM

In co-operation with:



WHEN: October 26, 2006

WHERE: George Brown College, George Brown Chef School,
Canadian Pacific Theatre at the Faculty of Hospitality & Tourism, Toronto, Ontario

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A Fine Balance

Research chefs successfully walk the line between art and science

Welcome to the premiere issue of *Food in Canada's Research Chefs in Canada*. You may be wondering why we're launching a supplement focusing on chefs when our primary audience is food and beverage producers and processors. The answer is simple – research chefs are now becoming integral to the food and beverage manufacturing process. No longer relegated to the test kitchen, today's research chefs work hand in hand with food technologists to develop delicious, shelf-stable, marketable consumer products. Whether that means working in a corporate structure or a foodservice chain environment, as consultants or as innovators, chefs add the flavour and flair to food science that turns a fair product into a delectable dish.

This new understanding of the product development process has been termed Culinology by the Atlanta, Ga.-based Research Chefs Association (RCA). Established in 1996, the organization now has more than 2,000 members from across the North American food industry, and promotes the work of research chefs through educational programs and professional designations (*for more on Culinology and the RCA, see p. 4*).

"The initial home meal replacement phase in the early 1990s really started manufacturers looking at what their customers wanted to eat at home, which was restaurant-quality foods," says Danny Bruns, corporate chef for Beloit, Wis.-based Kerry Americas and a founding member of the RCA. "As manufacturers started using culinary techniques to deliver full products, they learned that having a research chef to call on during the development of products expedited projects and increased awareness internally. We still create the gold standard, the initial creative platform, in the kitchen, but we also follow it through to the lab to taste and make suggestions during product development. Ultimately, this way allows you to shoot for that same fresh-made product."

Although many food and beverage manufacturers have been successfully merging culinary art and food science for a number of years, it's still an area that many in the industry are unfamiliar with, especially in Canada, where awareness of the RCA is more limited. But that is changing, as the

philosophy behind Culinology continues to influence all areas of the food industry.

Heinz Lehmann, corporate executive chef for Unilever Foodsolutions in North America based in Oakville, Ont., was the first Canadian research chef to join the RCA. Lehmann believes that the work of research chefs, and the increasing awareness of Culinology, is already redefining the role of chef. "Chefs today cannot be selfish anymore. You have to know and care about things like nutrition and allergens, the good and the bad fats. You have to get more involved in health and sanitation. You even have to learn about regulations and restrictions regarding packaging. It's not the same playing field anymore," says Lehmann. "And I definitely want to see more of this in Canada. When it comes to food knowledge there should be no borders."

Already there's evidence that the trend towards Culinology is travelling in the opposite direction too, from the lab into the kitchen as restaurant chefs begin to dabble with the physical properties of food. "Top-end restaurants are becoming more like labs as well, taking the food science concepts and practising molecular gastronomy," says Bruns. Trend-setting chefs are now experimenting with temperature, texture and the chemical makeup of food to produce unique pairings, aromas, sensations and essences. Bruns notes that this also opens a door for producers and suppliers to provide the products, ingredients, equipment and scientific know-how that the restaurant industry will require.

According to Bruns, raising awareness of Culinology within the culinary world and the food manufacturing industry will be key in boosting understanding of the work being done by research chefs. That also means teaching a new generation of food developers that art and science can be balanced. "Education is really the big push, getting students to understand both sides of the business. Before there were two distinct paths: food science and culinary art," says Bruns. "Culinology, combining the two paths, is really the next wave in food creation. Who knows where it will take us."

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Science in the Kitchen

Culinology is redefining food product
development in North America

BY ANNELIESE DOYLE

Instructor Jeffrey Cousminer teaching the Culinology 101 Workshop,
Part 4 at Johnson & Wales University in Providence, R.I.



Take a closer look at that boxed cake mix shelved at your neighbourhood supermarket, the packaged muffins sold alongside your favourite cup of brand-name coffee, and the extensive menu at a family friendly restaurant chain. Is it culinary art or is it technology?

The U.S.-based Research Chefs Association (RCA) says it's both, and has named it Culinology. Founded in 1996 by a group of research chefs working in the food product development industry, the association has witnessed the growing U.S. trend for professional chefs to become integrally involved in the R&D process. Surprisingly, food scientists – not chefs – have traditionally been on the forefront of developing new food products for the mass market, with a focus on food preservation and commercialization. However, as consumer tastes become more sophisticated and the competition becomes increasingly fierce, food manufacturers have shifted their focus to hone in on the culinary edge that can improve their bottom line.

Enter Culinology, a discipline that blends the culinary arts and food science. Culinology, a registered trademark of the RCA, is based on the principle that food product development can excel when R&D professionals begin with an integrated approach. Adding technical training to chefs' culinary expertise has streamlined manufacturing processes in the U.S. These technically savvy research chefs understand the limitations of manufacturing equipment and how ingredients react to various forms of processing, so their initial concepts for product and menu development begin as manufacturing-friendly ideas that the R&D team can further develop for commercialization.

According to Jeffrey Cousminer, Savoury Lab manager at Firmenich, Inc. and RCA Education Committee chair, there were few true research chefs in the industry 15 years ago. Chefs were hired right out of the kitchen to develop restaurant-quality recipes, or "gold standard" recipes, that food scientists would then have to translate for commercialization. He believes that the technically trained chef can improve the

R&D process. "Hiring a research chef who is formally trained in food science and manufacturing can enable a company to develop new foods on a much quicker time frame," he says. The culinary perspective has become invaluable in the development of food products because chefs can create concepts that appeal to consumers. Taste, texture, colour, flavours and trends that are on target for the intended audience can elevate a product's integrity and popularity in the market, whether consumers find the product on grocery store shelves, in quick-service restaurants or at fine-dining chains.

A NEW SCIENCE

Today, chefs from all sectors of the food industry are exploring the marriage of culinary arts and science. A true indication of this trend is Harold McGee's book *On Food and Cooking*, the pioneering text that introduced many culinarians to food science. The book sold 6,000 copies in its first printing in 1984, and in 2004 the fully revised second edition sold 35,000 copies in its first printing. By early 2006, book sales had reached 125,000. Trendsetting celebrity chefs such as Charlie Trotter and Robert Del Grande have also long touted the power of science in their high-end restaurant



kitchens. As a result, the food media has picked up on terms such as “molecular gastronomy” and “techno-chef” to describe what’s happening in haute cuisine kitchens that incorporate a techie edge.

While research chefs work behind the scenes, independent chefs get recognition for their experimental, avant-garde cuisine. New York-based chefs Wylie Dufresne of wd-50 and David Burke of davidburke & donatella have earned reputations for their innovative, science-based approach to food with unexpected textures like foams, vapours and flavour sprays. These innovative chefs are empowered through science to embrace new ingredients, equipment and techniques in their restaurant cooking.

CULINARY INNOVATION

As food production boomed in the mid-20th century, manufacturers began hiring chefs to design restaurant-quality recipes that food scientists could commercialize. Veterans of the industry describe the early days as something akin to “Chefs are from Mars, food scientists are from Venus,” meaning that the two spoke different languages when it came to product development. Remaining profitable, relevant and competitive in today’s marketplace has required that the chefs

and scientists on R&D teams learn to communicate effectively, integrating all elements of product development at all stages of the process.

Culinology developed from the concept that food product development should be culinary-driven. Cousminer recalls when he first heard the term in RCA circles. “It made perfect sense to me when I heard it,” he says. “It was the missing component, because post-Second World War food production focused heavily on preservation and conservation. Taste had become secondary.”

“[Culinology] makes food taste better,” agrees Bill “Pops” Hahne, chef/owner of Germantown, Wis.-based First Choice Ingredients and current RCA treasurer. “Research chefs have been around for a lot of years – many were European chefs hired by major manufacturers after the Second World War. As these chefs retired, more chefs from the U.S. were hired to replace them, many of whom were graduates of the culinary arts schools.” These chefs learned food science on the job. However, as food production enters new areas of food science, explains Hahne, some research chefs are further integrating science with their culinary expertise and becoming culinologists, taking on roles that require a solid knowledge of both disciplines.

THE RISE OF RESEARCH CHEFS

In 1994 at an American Culinary Federation (ACF) convention, a group of research chefs requested that the organization pursue a professional certification for research chefs. However, the ACF did not believe the demand existed. Determined to organize and address the challenges facing their growing industry niche, a small group led by Winston Riley established what is now a 2,000-member organization, the RCA. “Our future is bright, considering the great importance of the culinary perspective in the development of products and services, as we approach the new millennium,” wrote Riley, then president, in a 1997 RCA newsletter.

From the start, the RCA committed to develop two professional certifications, the Certified Research Chef (CRC) and the Certified Culinary Scientist (CCS). CRCs and CCSs have become the industry standard for food product development professionals who are committed to the mastery of both the culinary arts and technical proficiency. “My certification serves as concrete evidence of my commitment to the research chef profession, and it shows that while my main professional focus is culinary, I also demonstrate a firm grasp of the concepts and practices that encompass food science, manufacturing and product development,” says Anne Hildebrandt, CRC and research chef at T. Hasegawa USA.

DEFINING THE FUTURE OF FOOD

With interest gaining in these professional certifications, educational programs became an early priority for the RCA, making it their mission to offer conferences, regional meetings and continuing education workshops. Their Culinology 101 workshops have been offered since 2001 as a four-part series that teaches food science to chefs. The Association has also developed a two-part series of workshops for food

scientists seeking culinary skills.

The RCA initiated these cutting-edge, interdisciplinary degree programs in 2001 to prepare tomorrow's culinologist for a sophisticated, demanding work environment that requires both culinary and technical skills. These new programs are attracting ambitious students with both creative and analytical talents. In 2003 the association reached a milestone with the gradua-

tion of its first Culinology student, Donald Moss, from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). After earning his bachelor's degree, Moss continued on to pursue a master's degree in meat science at UNL. Since Moss' graduation, six more students have graduated with the degree, and enrolment in the programs has increased steadily.

The educational programs are fairly

flexible. Some Culinology degree programs transfer two-year culinary degrees from community colleges to partnering universities that offer food science courses. Others are offered in a traditional four-year setting at major U.S. universities with established food science programs. Today, the RCA has seven approved programs operating in the U.S., and is expanding programs to additional qualified venues.

John Kennedy II, a former Culinology degree student, exemplifies the positive attitude typical of students entering the industry. He completed his Bachelor of Science degree in Nutrition and Dietetics with an option in Culinology in 2005 at UNL, and began working as a culinologist for Wells' Dairy, Inc. upon graduation. "A culinologist is a valuable position that strategically places you between a chef and a food scientist in a manufacturing setting," he says. "The expertise that I bring to [Wells' Dairy] is few and far between." Kennedy encourages students to explore a four-year degree in Culinology and to network at industry events such as the RCA Annual Conference. "Start cooking in a kitchen now," he adds. "Get as much experience in the restaurant industry as you can, because you're going to need it when you work in R&D."

John Folsie, owner of Chef John Folsie & Company and current RCA president, agrees that the culinary focus is key. "We often hear the phrase, 'it's all about the food,' and for this reason the expertise and vision of the culinarian in food product development is imperative," he says. "Each time we approach the bench top to create a product, ultimately our goals are taste and flavour. Packaging, marketing, delivery systems – these are the concerns of others. From our earliest days as chefs, we've come to learn that as quality is built into the taste of a product, success is soon to follow." RCC

To learn more about the RCA, or RCA continuing education workshops and RCA-approved culinary degree programs in the U.S., visit www.culinology.org or call (404) 252-3663.

Cross Over To Culinology®



Why? To join top chefs and food scientists who are embracing the unique discipline of CULINOLOGY®—the blending of culinary arts and food technology. These practitioners consistently deliver the Gold Standard food experience to many millions of discerning taste buds worldwide.

Become a member of the Research Chefs Association (RCA), the home of Culinology. Walk with an elite group of food industry professionals who have chosen the path—and the passion—of new food product development and innovation.

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Taking the lead

Research chefs are stepping from the back of the house up to the bench, and taking a primary role in new product development • BY CAROLYN COOPER

While the number of research chefs in Canada may be small compared to the U.S. (the Research Chefs Association estimates there are approximately 50 Canadian members, with more than 2,000 south of the border), their calibre is second to none. From developing recipes hand-in-hand with food scientists for multimillion-dollar product rollouts, to designing prototype products for country-wide foodservice or grocery chains, research chefs play an integral role in the challenging task of new product development. Following is just a sample of some of the talented research chefs living and working in Canada.



WENDY BASKERVILLE
Vice-president
Research and Development
Center Plate Developments LLC
Toronto

Q: What was it about food research that drew you into this area of the profession?

That's difficult to answer. It's not food research though that is the title. It's food and/or product development. It's feeding people, which is first and foremost what chefs do. It's knowing that nowadays restaurants and grocery stores are in direct competition for food dollars, and that there is no reason that so-called "processed food" can't be every bit as good as any other food. It's adding the passion for flavour and texture and satisfaction that complements the science of our technical counterparts. It was lovely to feed people in restaurants and venues for all those years. But now I can stand in a supermarket aisle and know I'm feeding thousands a day. I can have the satisfaction of knowing that someone in a hospital is being surprised that the food doesn't have to be lousy. It's actually providing excellence to the restaurant industry since so many of these restaurants are outsourcing to the food manufacturing industry.

Q: How would you describe your culinary philosophy?

I want to take the high quality that can and does exist in the manufacturing end of this business to the most consumers possible. I live to prove that passion can coexist with science in a truly harmonious fashion.

Q: What do you love most about your job?

Every day is different. I am never bored. Exasperated, aggravated, impatient, euphoric, tired, energized, but never bored!

Q: What are some of the challenges facing research chefs today, and the area of culinary R&D in general?

This question has a different answer depending on where you are. Research chef is an acknowledged profession in the U.S., and to a certain extent in Europe. Here in Canada we are still not necessarily evident in every facility. We bring an important discipline to the bench. It is our first challenge to make our potential employers aware of what our capabilities are. We need to force our educational facilities to begin providing us with some of the technical information we need to take our passion to the bench.

The consuming public no longer cares to spend precious free time doing what our mothers did. They want to buy the food ready to serve with little or no effort. But they want to have the same quality in a meal that came from their mother's kitchen. It can be done. There are ways and means available now to provide expert nutrition along with superb taste and texture in that ready-to-go format. Our challenge is to keep raising the bar on this standard. Our challenge is to meet the responsibility of making sure these foods are safe and healthy. Our challenge is convincing our employers that the consumer will pay for this if we deliver value.

Q: What opportunities do you see for your sector of the industry?

I work primarily in plant settings. The need for skilled R&D at the plant level is growing. Even the smallest plants are now seeing there is no chance of growing their business without a decent R&D chef, but there are not enough chefs who have any training or understanding of what goes on at the bench top. It's a wide open door. Beyond the plant it's leading to chains whose executive and corporate chefs are beginning to have to understand product development at the bench level because they are developing their menus in plants, not in kitchens. Healthcare, corporate catering, institutions, cafeterias, supermarkets, take-out stores and personal chef operations all need development chefs. The demand grows daily.

Q: What else can you tell us about your company or the work you're currently doing?

I'm part of a company now that is working with new packaging technologies. Specifically, I'm working on developing product packed in steam performance packaging. Put simply, we're able to use a microwave to deliver quick, nutritionally sound, highly flavourful food. The film we're using preserves up to 50 per cent more water-soluble nutrition than any other format. Because it cooks in a closed atmosphere it guarantees preservation of colour and flavours. The originators of this technology saw this as a great way to cook vegetables, frozen or fresh. It's a perfect example of what happens when you take a chef into the mix. I began cooking everything under the sun, including seafood, protein, full meals and so on. We're moving this technology into the new millennium. As anyone can tell you, I'm passionate about what I do. I love this end of the business.



SCOTT BROWN
Corporate Chef, R&D
Ocean Pier Inc.
Scoudouc, N.B.

Q: What was it about food research that drew you into this area of the profession?

The opportunity to use my intellect at a higher level.

Q: How would you describe your culinary philosophy?

Respect the ingredients, showcase them and rationalize everything you do with them.

Q: What do you love most about your job?

The endless opportunities to learn and grow.

Q: What are some of the challenges facing research chefs today, and the area of culinary R&D in general?

Being able to balance being a chef and scientist, and knowing which hat to wear at the appropriate time (we call this Culinology).

Q: What opportunities do you see for your sector of the industry?

Being involved in value-added seafood, such as hors d'oeuvres, appetizers and frozen entrées. I think this industry is yet very untapped in terms of innovation, variety and quality. We are setting some very interesting standards as we speak.

Q: What else can you tell us about your company or the work you're currently doing?

I started here as a product development chef five years ago, with 25 employees overall and 12 core products. Today we

have 120 to 150 employees during peak seasons, with over 60 products, and I oversee Product Development and Quality Assurance. Our revenue has grown four-fold since 2001. I have just hired an assistant and will be writing my Certified Research Chef exam this year. We pride ourselves in building close relationships with our customers and developing niche products.

We also realize that employing chefs is definitely an advantage to us, and right now there is myself, my assistant and a chef in quality control. We offer culinary experience, married with technical knowledge from our QA personnel, that allows us to grow and develop at faster rates than other companies. Being a small company, the decisions are made by a core group of five managers, with input from key staff members, so we can move and develop products for our customers very quickly. We are the first company in Canada to develop a value-added oyster product, being launched this fall. The oysters are harvested less than 50 miles from our plant.



CHUCK CURRIE
Owner
Quality Food, Systems & Training
Vancouver

Q: What was it about food research that drew you into this area of the profession?

I was always interested in science, from a very young age.

Q: How would you describe your culinary philosophy?

Clean tastes, streamlined offerings, minimized inventories.

Q: What do you love most about your job?

The relationship with my clients. I'm very lucky to be able to be selective and work only with people I really like.

Q: What are some of the challenges facing research chefs today, and the area of culinary R&D in general?

Resisting the over-prevalent use of resins, concentrates, powders and gums.

Q: What opportunities do you see for your sector of the industry?

Bold flavours, streamlined menus, increased use of fruit and fresh produce.

Q: What else can you tell us about your company or the work you're currently doing?

My work is almost too interesting right now. I have a large restaurant client that is making the step very quickly from coffee shop to casual dining, and is using me in its television and radio advertising to add legitimacy to its improved food

quality. I'm also designing its prototype kitchen, and have started an apprenticeship program for the client.

I've been working with the world's largest convenience store. It is about to launch a revolutionary line of world class sandwiches at premium prices, under the Our Chef's Passion label. These sandwiches include two-year-aged Cheddar, artisan breads specifically designed to retain quality under refrigeration, world-class meats, vine-ripened tomatoes, a new hybrid lettuce that retains crispness, and condiments made from scratch specifically to complement the other ingredients.

Finally, I'm working with a high-tech egg company finalizing flavour profiles for a hollandaise made with real butter and eggs. It's shelf stable in the refrigerator for two months, can be brought to a boil without separating, and can be held in the steam table all day long, then cooled and reheated the next day.



STEFAN CZAPALAY

Owner
Chef Stefan Global Gourmet
Halifax

Q: What was it about food research that drew you into this area of the profession?

The science behind cooking has always been of interest to me, as well as science in general. I have seen how to raise the quality of any food product by balancing art and science.

Q: How would you describe your culinary philosophy?

My philosophy is based on my trademarked theory "natural order," in which I'm certain specific foods are meant to go together and others are not. It's possible to pair foods and flavours on many levels, but we can't just randomly combine ingredients without some type of sensibility.

Q: What do you love most about your job?

The best part about my job is that it changes gears at lightning speed. One day it's a high-end recipe for intimate dining. The next day it's mass-produced foods for thousands. It's never dull and I learn daily.

Q: What are some of the challenges facing research chefs today, and the area of culinary R&D in general?

One challenge facing research chefs today I would think is pay rate. There must be better levels of pay so chefs can continue to educate themselves either formally, or by travelling and eating out.

Q: What opportunities do you see for your sector of the industry?

Our sector will have unparalleled growth in the next few

years as retailers realize the potential of ready-to-go meals and consumers demand higher and higher quality of prepared foods. Also, with industry labour shortages all food-service outlets will need to bring in more and better-quality prepared foods.

Q: What else can you tell us about your company or the work you're currently doing?

I'm currently developing several products for the airline industry, as well as researching and developing more sous-vide techniques. I'm trying to commercialize a lot of the top-tier restaurant-style foods into mainstream retail options.



DOMENICO FORTE

Coordonnateur Approv et mise en marché
Prêt à manger
Le Marché Végétarien
Magog, Que.

Q: What was it about food research that drew you into this area of the profession?

The challenge. To be successful in this field you must come out of your chef comfort zone and constantly challenge the way you did something classically in professional cuisine. Due to processing, equipment or employee limitations you must find a solution out of the box to get certain products or projects developed and work with many partners, including ingredient suppliers and equipment specialists.

Q: How would you describe your culinary philosophy?

Food must be sensual. We must challenge the establishment to build the best-tasting white cloth restaurant products. Shelf life and pH levels are extremely important, but the food item must stay true to the original prototype and taste great not just good.

Q: What do you love most about your job?

Working with a dynamic team and building something from scratch and taking it to the supermarket shelf.

Q: What are some of the challenges facing research chefs today, and the area of culinary R&D in general?

Development projects being rushed through too quickly. While it is getting better, at times there's also a lack of industry comprehension towards what we do. Another challenge is marketing and sales teams not allowing us to fully offer all that we can as chefs on certain projects. As well there is a challenge in finding pertinent educational courses to keep developing our experience. Finally, there is still too much development of similar products instead of pioneering new ones. Again, this is starting to get better.

Q: What opportunities do you see for your sector of the industry?

Many companies will need chefs to bring our *savoir faire* to their R&D teams to improve existing products and to develop new ones, and to play a role with food technologists. The consumer is more demanding now, and rightly so. We need to keep raising the bar on fresh, frozen and dry processed products.

Q: What else can you tell us about your company or the work you're currently doing?

I'm currently developing supermarket shelf-fresh products with several food suppliers for a grocery chain called Le Marché Végétarien. We have eight stores in total. I have recently developed and opened a new Italian food concept in our new store in Montreal. We also operate two limited concepts (with no pasta bar) in Sherbrooke and Magog, Que. in the ready-to-eat sections.

In Montreal, in our Rosemere location, the store is named Le Panier Fraîcheur. It features a full-service counter at which customers choose their ingredients. For the pizza and pasta counters, we also offer signature pizzas and sandwiches. I've developed the recipes and the pricing with our team, and oversee employee training in all locations with our operations team. We've had a very positive reception from the public. We also believe in using induction cooking and turbochef oven technology to do all the

cooking, which works out great for us in serving the client more efficiently.



MATTHEW R. HOAG
Corporate chef, Corporate Services
Boston Pizza International Inc.
Richmond, B.C.

Q: What was it about food research that drew you into this area of the profession?

I loved to take things apart when I was a kid – I wanted to see how they worked. The problem back then was that I couldn't put them back together! As an adult analyzing, constructing and deconstructing food fascinates me. Understanding how foods work on a base level has been a continuation of a childhood inquiring mind. Part of my job being in a research capacity keeps me fulfilled.

Q: How would you describe your culinary philosophy?

Simple, distinct and clean; I like bold flavours that say what they mean and mean what they say. Many subtle

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-Laurette Rondenet
President
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flavours are great and frequently necessary, but I really prefer my palate to be assailed with flavour rather than dig for the nuances. Clean tastes that can be identified and do not compete with each other so that they are built in layers is mandatory.

Q: What do you love most about your job?

Every day poses different challenges. When you have completed a project there are always several more waiting in the wings. This area of the business has allowed me to develop different skill sets than if I had stayed in a conventional kitchen environment. I also enjoy working with the best people in the industry.

Q: What are some of the challenges facing research chefs today, and the area of culinary R&D in general?

I think we are being pulled in so many directions at the same time that it requires focus, commitment and belief in the mission statement of the organization you work with to maintain perspective. Keeping priorities in check is essential to merge the global trends and those that impact your business most immediately.

Q: What opportunities do you see for your sector of the industry?

Opportunities will come in various guises, but the main one I see will be zoning in on consumer trends for the next five to 10 years. A large part of that will also mean being ahead of the curve and having the ability to respond quickly to changing consumer demands and evolving business environments.

Q: What else can you tell us about your company or the work you're currently doing?

We are constantly looking at new items, ingredients and feature menus. Simultaneously we look at our existing products to see where we can improve them. Working with purchasing to fine-tune value-added products and evolving them with our supplier partners is always ongoing.



JOHN IAFRATE
Product Development Manager
Nestlé FoodServices – Dehydrated
Culinary
Toronto

Q: What was it about food research that drew you into this area of the profession?

After graduating from George Brown College with a Diploma in Culinary Management in 1987 I worked for Northern Fine Foods in the PD Lab. This opened my eyes to a whole new industry. I was hooked on the aspect of combining my culinary skills with food science. I decided

to go back to college and graduated with a Diploma in Food Technology. Thereafter I joined Nestlé Canada as a Food Technologist.

Q: How would you describe your culinary philosophy?

I try to be openminded while balancing my creative side with my analytical side. I never turn down an opportunity to taste new things. Today's weird may be tomorrow's mainstream.

Q: What do you love most about your job?

Sitting in a restaurant next to someone who's eating something that you created on the bench and followed through to commercialization. In other words, watching your baby grow up.

Q: What are some of the challenges facing research chefs today, and the area of culinary R&D in general?

One of the biggest challenges culinology is facing is the perceived "hybridization" of our industry. Is it chef led or food scientist led? Can the two disciplines truly unite? Will we strive to be culinologists or chefs or food technologists with degrees in Culinology?

Q: What opportunities do you see for your sector of the industry?

I personally think the industry is evolving towards Culinology. More and more companies will hire those individuals with the credentials and will be willing to pay a premium to get them since we're still a rare breed.

Q: What else can you tell us about your company or the work you're currently doing?

I have been working for Nestlé FoodServices for the last 17 years, currently as Product Development manager. Our purpose for being is to grow through meeting the needs of our operators, and the expectations of our out-of-home consumers.



JOHN PLACKO
Corporate Chef
Campbell's Company of Canada
Toronto

Q: What was it about food research that drew you into this area of the profession?

I joined the Research Chefs Association six years ago. Since then I've had the urge to deepen my knowledge and understanding of the food science aspect as it relates to the culinary aspect. When the corporate chef position became available at Campbell's I jumped at the opportunity. Working with the product developers gives me the chance

to learn something new about food every day.

Q: How would you describe your culinary philosophy?

It's still developing. As a research chef, it's become very clear to me that I have a responsibility to provide great tasting products that are also good for you.

Q: What do you love most about your job?

I love the variety of projects I work on with the R&D team (there are 26 teammates in total). They're a great group of people with loads of knowledge. I'm lucky to be working with both the Campbell's Foodservice team and the Retail teams. There are also many internal events that give me another area to be really creative in with a variety of our products from around the globe. I think I have the best job in the company!

Q: What are some of the challenges facing research chefs today, and the area of culinary R&D in general?

Our consumers are demanding more – great taste, no compromise on nutrition, good value and products that make their lives easier and meal-time more enjoyable. At Campbell Canada our vision is “Extraordinary, authentic nourishment for all.” We recognize that our consumers need real food solutions and we're working hard to offer just that. Whether it's creating innovative packaging or reducing sodium levels, innovation is always top of mind with any product we develop.

Q: What opportunities do you see for your sector of the industry?

I would say there are two big areas of opportunity. I believe that packaging technology will enable us to put items on shelves that would have been unheard of only a few years ago, and this is very exciting. We also have an opportunity to provide consumers with numerous options to hit Health Canada's recommended five to 10 servings of vegetables and fruits a day. It's so important, as many people are on the go or don't have the time, yet still want to eat well.

Q: What else can you tell us about your company or the work you're currently doing?

Campbell's main focus is to offer healthier food solutions to our consumers, with a focus on the goodness of vegetables. Our vision is ingrained in everything we do – from new product development to recipe reformulations to creating limits for sodium and fat levels. Over the past five

years, Campbell's has reduced the average amount of sodium by approximately 15 per cent across all our retail soup brands. Our health and wellness focus extends across our product offerings for retail and food-service. It's exciting to be a part of an organization that cares so much for its consumers at home and away from home. [RCC]

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Feeding young minds

Chefs who want more from their careers can now access made-in-Canada educational programs

BY DEANNA ROSOLEN

Photo courtesy of The Culinary Institute of Canada

Professionally speaking, we can all feel like we've hit a career wall at times. But for chefs who decide they want to sharpen their professional skills, the options have always been limited in Canada. If they wanted to pursue further education, for instance, they would have had to go outside the culinary world and study business, hospitality or tourism. The lack of homegrown programs geared to chefs also meant that many went outside the country. The good news is that culinary educational opportunities in Canada are slowly evolving to accommodate chefs who want more.

It was the lack of educational opportunities that set the wheels in motion at The Culinary Institute of Canada, part of Holland College in Charlottetown, P.E.I. The school is launching a two-year program this fall called Applied Degree in Culinary Operations. When asked what the impetus for the launch was, program co-ordinator Craig Youdale talked about the fact that many chefs, at a certain point in their careers, feel that they're at a standstill. "They have the physical ability to create and make food in a restaurant or a hotel," he says, "but their ability to both manage and move

up the corporate ladder and all these non-traditional roles like food product development that exist, they were not qualified to do."

The other hurdle for chefs, says Youdale, is feeling disconnected from the scientific process of food creation. Chefs understand the art of creating food, but may not have a handle on the science or management side of the business. At the same time, there are food scientists who know all there is to know about the science behind food concepts and ingredients, but find their understanding and experience is limited on the culinary arts side. Youdale adds that of course there are those who do grasp both sides, but they are few and far between. As a result, a key aim of the program is to "break through that barrier."

The Culinary Institute of Canada's new program offers courses in food product development, facility design and project management. It's geared specifically to chefs, with the aim of offering them opportunities outside of cooking and foodservice. In combination with their culinary arts diplomas, the program becomes a university degree.

In Toronto, George Brown College is also launching a new culinary program scheduled to start in January 2007. Called Food Concept Management, it's a post-diploma program that targets those who have foundational culinary management and chef training skills. Winnie Chiu, managing director of the Compliments Culinary Centre at George Brown College, is writing some of the course curriculum. The interdisciplinary program combines the knowledge of food product development with the strategies of marketing, sensory evaluation, new dining, and culinary and franchising concepts. "It's not really just for people with a culinary background who want to switch to product development. It's for chefs who may think, 'I've got this great line of recipes and I really want to develop them and market them and sell them in retail,'" she says. "So it's targeting people who have that aspiration and want to find out more."

Chiu suspects the demand for educational opportunities is also being

pushed by the food industry, which would like to see products get to market more quickly. When, for example, a Thai dish emerges in a restaurant, it could take four or five years before it appears on a grocery shelf. Yet at the same time they know that taste-savvy consumers are now more willing to pay more to indulge in good, unique foods, she says. As a result, food manufacturers wanting to gain a competitive edge are beginning to realize that having people who understand both the culinary and science sides of food development can get their products to market faster.

Besides, adds Chiu, chefs and food scientists have always worked together, but with different objectives and with different jargons. What the industry is finding out now, she says, is that when creating new products there must be a balance between the triangle of taste, cost, and health and nutrition. That's going to be "easier for someone who understands both sides of the coin," she says. RCC

FOOD SCIENTIST TO CHEF

Chefs may find it difficult to expand their educational experience, but food scientists also come up against challenges. Janine Mosley is one such person trying to break through the barrier – in the opposite direction. Mosley, who is product development manager at Brampton, Ont.-based Private Recipes Ltd., studied food science at the University of Guelph, a five-year degree program, and is now working to achieve her Certified Culinary Scientist (CCS) designation through the Atlanta, Ga.-based Research Chefs Association (RCA).

According to Mosley, she wanted to pursue the designation because she felt her lack of knowledge of the culinary side was posing a hurdle in her day-to-day work. "I found that I would develop products and be disappointed because I wouldn't really eat it – it looks good, the costing was done properly, the scale up was done properly, but there should be something more," she says. "How do you bring it to the next level and achieve that restaurant quality or homemade quality that people are used to?"

The CCS designation attempts to fill that missing link of experience. As Mosley says, scientists often don't have a handle on the basic culinary fundamentals of flavour, appearance and texture, in other words what makes good food good. The RCA's website says the designation aims to augment food scientists' training with the culinary arts, so food scientists can use this knowledge to develop "superior products in the marketplace."

The challenge for Mosley was finding a specialized program geared to food scientists to help her achieve the designation. Ultimately, she decided to return to community college and complete a culinary arts diploma. The RCA, she says, offers specialized culinary arts training for food technologists, but it's a costly way of doing it. Returning to a community college program has meant having to take subjects such as basic English. It's also meant being taught by chefs who try to dabble in the food science, but may not have that kind of training themselves.

Regardless of the challenges, Mosley believes the designation will be worth it. "I definitely like working with chefs as a product developer," she says. "I like the language they speak and the focus on the food and flavours versus the science or the business aspect. So I wanted to know what they knew, and I thought it would be a good area to pursue."

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