

Berry on Dairy

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Hands-On Product Development Experience



We live in such a virtual world that it is often easy to forget that food product development is a hands-on effort. (At least for now it is.)

My eldest son, after finally getting back in the classroom after the seven days of Chicago public school teachers striking, informed me that his biology teacher announced that they will not be dissecting real frogs this year. There's no money to purchase the frogs. Rather, she has an interactive computer program that allows each student to virtually dissect the four-legged leaper.

I find this bothersome. As much as I was disgusted with this biology lesson back in the day, I also know that it was a major driver of directing me towards food science. I loved the hands-on part of the process.

And as much as food science is about getting your hands dirty, real-world product development includes other disciplines such as packaging and processing, safety and regulatory, and marketing and distribution. The Dairy Research Institute gives college students the chance to get a taste of real-world dairy foods product development, empowering them to experience all of these critical aspects of bringing a new product to market.

The Dairy Research Institute, established under the leadership of America's dairy farmers, will be conducting its second annual New Product Competition. Open to undergraduate and graduate students in the United States and Canada, this year's competition challenges student teams to develop a new dairy product for the morning meal occasion, which includes any meal eaten before breakfast, for breakfast, as a morning meal replacement or morning snack.

According to recent consumer research on morning eating habits conducted by the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, nearly four out of five consumers over the age of 2 eat or drink something during a typical morning. This represents more than 100 billion food or beverage occasions and an estimated \$200 billion in sales. Still, approximately 42 million people do not eat or drink anything in the morning, presenting a sizable opportunity.

“Although milk, cheese and yogurt have consistently performed well at breakfast, consumers are seeking new products that meet their convenience and flavor preferences. With their submissions, future product developers at colleges across the U.S. and Canada can leverage dairy’s valuable nutrition profile and market trends to spur new product innovations,” says Bill Graves, senior vice president, Dairy Research Institute.

A judging panel including experts from across the dairy industry will evaluate entries and select three winning teams to be recognized at the annual American Dairy Science Association (ADSA) Joint Annual Meeting in Indianapolis, July 8 to 12, 2013. In addition, the three winning concepts will be showcased at the U.S. Dairy Export Council booth at the Institute of Food Technologists annual meeting in Chicago, July 13 to 16, 2013. The winning teams will receive a combined \$16,000 in cash prizes, including \$8,000 for first place, \$5,000 for second place and \$3,000 for third place. Full contest details are available at [HERE](#).

In its inaugural year, the Dairy Research Institute New Product Competition tasked students with developing an innovative dairy beverage that leveraged Innovation Center consumer research on milk’s competitive beverage set. The winning teams were announced earlier this year and included an oat-infused vanilla milk, an on-the-go mango drinkable Greek yogurt and a caffeine-enhanced drinkable yogurt. You can read about the winners [HERE](#).

The first-place team from Clemson found value in the new product competition’s practical, hands-on approach. According to Johnny McGregor, Ph.D., professor and faculty advisor, Clemson University, his students also gained valuable insights for their future careers.

“I think dairy is the best model to use to teach students product development because there are so many different options and functional aspects to consider, from nutrition levels to shelf life preservation,” McGregor says. “It’s an ideal teaching category for real experience.”

The deadline for contest submissions is Jan. 15, 2013. To learn more about the Dairy Research Institute New Product Competition, including eligibility guidelines and judging criteria, visit [HERE](#).

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