



Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship

Open House

Entrepreneurs Seek Marketing Expertise at NECFE Open House

Geneva: The Open House at the Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship (NECFE) on Friday, August 17, was a taste and tell event that attracted over 80 entrepreneurs from throughout the Northeast. Some, like Roger and Marcy Lloyd of Fairport, were in the idea stage of introducing a new processed product into the niche market arena. Others, like Juan and Maria Contreras, who already own a successful take-out restaurant and lunch cart in East Rochester, were considering introducing new products into their locally popular line of processed foods.

NECFE helps people who have an idea for a new food product or food processing business test their idea, safely formulate their recipes, and develop a sound business plan before launching their product. The partnership between the Food Venture Center at Cornell, which was established in 1988, and the Center for Food Science at the University of Vermont was funded by a \$3.8 million, four-year grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 2000.

"We were pleased that so many of our hard-working and innovative entrepreneurs were able to attend at such a busy time of year," said Olga Padilla-Zakour, NECFE director. "Everybody was very impressed with the program and the facilities." She said the marketing seminar was "a tremendous success," and was pleased that assemblymen Brian Kolb and Clifford Crouch were able to participate in "such active dialogue" with so many New York entrepreneurs. The event may be incorporated into NECFE's workshop schedule as an annual event.

"The NECFE Open House shows the progress that can be made when the university works as a partner with the private sector," said Director Jim Hunter. "The event and the work of NECFE show the importance of having dedicated and technically competent staff, without which success would be impossible."

In the marketing seminar, Jacqueline Beckley and Melanie Cushman, of the Understanding and Insight Group, stressed the importance of market research, analyzing the competition, developing a business plan, and the product development process.

"I'm going to implement some of the ideas from the presentation this morning as soon as I get back," said Contreras. Like others, he cited "new resources," "more ideas," and "things we hadn't thought about" as some of the real benefits of attending the Open House.

David Fellows, from the NYS Dept of Ag and Markets, Assemblyman Brian M Kolb (R-129, Canandaigua), and Assemblyman Clifford Crouch (R-122, Brainbridge) participated in the panel discussion on the "Impact of Food Entrepreneurship on Economic Development." Both legislators sit on the assembly agriculture committee and were very interested to hear about the issues facing would-be entrepreneurs. The dialogue was brisk. It focused on New York's burdensome regulatory environment, increasing the marketing opportunities for New York products, and developing cooperative distribution networks for small and medium-size New York producers.

In the processing business, nothing speaks louder than the smell and the taste of the foods themselves. At noon, entrepreneurs, legislators, Station employees and members of the public lined up to sample over 30 specialty food products in the Vinification and Brewing Lab provided by entrepreneurs who have worked with NECFE. Products included BBQ sauces, flavored salsas, stuffed olives, pickles, jams, goat cheese, jerkey, salami, smoked turkey, goat milk ice cream, yogurt, Chai tea, fresh fruit juices, crackers, mustards and more. Tastes ranged from the fiery to the piquant, salty to sweet, and cold to hot.

At the same time, Edgar Moss, Ellen Knapp and Daniel Corsaro participated in a steamy demonstration of small-scale processing in the Fruit and Vegetable Research Pilot Plant. They provided canned samples of BBQ sauce, apple cherry juice and Italian salsa for people to take home.

For more information about NECFE, or to obtain videotape copies of the marketing seminar, call NECFE at 1-888-624-6784, or email necfe@nysaes.cornell.edu

A copy of this press release is at:

<http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/necfe/nande/CUpresrelease.html>

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