

Good to the last drop!

Attendees meet, greet, learn and sip

BY FÜSUN ATALAY

The 2008 Canadian Coffee & Tea Show, presented by Fulcrum Events at Palais de Congrès in the heart of Montréal, was good to the last sip. Participants and attendees from every corner of Canada as well as the US enjoyed a variety of practical seminars. These were followed by hands-on workshops to improve day-to-day operations, keep abreast of new trends, introduce organic and Fair Trade Certification and increase sales through creating coffee cocktails, tea beverages, stunningly innovative desserts and easy-to-whip, profit-yielding smoothies.

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Identifying new beverage trends, learning through hands-on sessions, and forming new business contacts were all highlights of the 2008 Canadian Coffee & Tea Show. The show covered every aspect: from the sustainability of Fair Trade Certification and organic products to the booming popularity of healthy energy drinks; from the use of Chai in infusions, flavouring sweet and savoury creations as well as lattes to pairing desserts with drinks; and the importance of top-line equipment.

“We’re thrilled to be in Montréal for the first time for the Canadian Coffee & Tea Show” said Russell Hoffman, general manager of Fulcrum Events. “Over the two days we’ve had in excess of 1,200 attendees, not including exhibitors and other industry personnel.”

A leadership panel discussing key issues affecting the success of independent cafés emphasized the importance of location, signage, visibility and consistency in offering the ultimate, unique experience to the customer. Presenters also discussed the feasibility and logistics of adding foodservice to operators’ offerings and debated the merits of the Fair Trade Certification.

The educational curriculum was well-received, and seminars were standing-room only.

Jim Zalusky, regional sales manager, Kerry Food & Beverage, Canada, said their booth had customers waiting for half an hour to talk to them. “The show was four times better than I thought it was going to be. The customers were enthusiastic and well qualified; the seminars we conducted were very well attended, and the questions were thoughtful.”

According to Chris Glowienka, VP-general manager of Sara Lee and one of the show’s lead sponsors, “The biggest interest was in sustainable coffee. As an active supporter of UTZ, a program designed to ensure that economic, social and environmental goals are achieved, we found the participants asked responsible and engaging questions.”

Liquid assets explored

“The show’s demonstrators provided all steps of coffee production from roasters to baristas — which was very useful,” remarked Umberto Pasquini of Café Napoleon in LaSalle, Québec. “It’s nice to exchange expertise with each other,” added the master roaster of gourmet, high mountain and organic Fair Trade coffee since 1994.

For Scott Hillyer, director of operations, Coffee Matters, St John’s, Newfoundland, the largest eye-opener, “..besides making new contacts outside of Newfoundland,” was “..seeing the big upswing in tea and the boom in low cost-high profit energy drinks for operators targeting the Gen-Y audience.”

Robert Louette of Unilever Foodsolutions impressed many attendees with pears poached in concentrated white tea, sweetened with sugar and reduced to a caramel, and scallops served with compound butter made with crushed black tea. He admitted, “Nobody invents anymore. We revamp and re-adapt to accommodate new trends. One can always sell an old classic on its proven virtues.”

Jim Zalusky summed up the feeling at the close of this year’s Canadian Coffee & Tea Show: “Congratulations on a well-run show. I look forward to next year’s show in Vancouver. Book hotel rooms now. It’s going to be busy with the Olympics coming!”

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