



*Sfpa*

# FOOD FORUM

SOUTHEASTERN FOOD PROCESSORS ASSOCIATION  
<http://www.sfpa-food.org>

MARCH 2004

## **SFPA 30th Annual Conference Charleston, South Carolina November 4 - 6, 2004**



It's never too early to mark your calendar and make plans to go to Charleston, SC. By popular demand, your board has decided to go back to Charleston for our 2004 Annual Meeting. They are already hard at work planning the upcoming event after meeting on January 27 at the Hilton, Charleston Harbor Resort and Marina next to Patriot's Point.

Preliminary plans indicate this is going to be a wonderful meeting. The Board has already identified a list of excellent speakers and topics. You will want to be sure to arrive early so you don't miss the supplier's reception on Thursday evening. This is a great time to catch up with old friends and welcome new members. Due to the popularity of the ladies program last year, we are planning another spouses program, so be sure to bring your partner.

So mark your calendar for November 4-6, 2004 and we will see you there!

### **President's Message**



The January Board Meeting in Charleston (Patriot's Point), was a testament to the attendees and the tenacious nature of people in the food business in general. Weather made traveling to the meeting both hazardous and challenging. Ice/snow coated roads and electrical power

outages along the roadways made travel slow and fuel consumption awareness mandatory. A big thanks to Marion for arranging dinner that was both elegant and down right wonderful with a Southern flair.

I was thinking of the parallels of the efforts required to make the meeting and run our businesses on a day to day basis. Words like "challenging, hazardous, and awareness" are all a part of daily operations in the procuring, processing and distribution of complex food items in the regulated, audited and scrutinized food industry.

The Board in our meeting unanimously agreed that the bioterrorism or terrorism theme needed a rest this year. Not to reduce the importance of this very important issue, but the general feeling was it was time to address some new/different concerns in the food industry. At

length, the discussion brought us to cost control, and the impact of import/export of foods, food ingredients, package components, and literally the pros and cons of this world-wide trade on U.S. food manufacturers. There was a definite feeling that importing and exporting food products, as well as other consumable goods, is not going away and no one there seemed to think it an all positive factor for U.S food manufacturers. A lot of concerns were expressed about job losses in all sectors of the U.S. economy effected by "Free Trade" agreements.

So out of this discussion was conceived a new "theme" for the 2004 Convention and meetings. Access to people with expertise (whatever that means) in this area is going to be more challenging than with bioterrorism. As we move towards our Raleigh meeting in early April, we hope to have a list of possible contacts for speakers this November. Between Dr. Rushing, Dr. Morris and the diverse group of vendors associated with the SFPA, I am confident we will come up with an informative and beneficial program. If you have someone that has expertise, knowledge, or is involved with import/export trading, we would love to have their name submitted for the April meeting.

Darius Luck  
President, SFPA

## Leaked Papers Reveals GM Go-Ahead

The British government has disclosed its final decision to give needed approval for the 1<sup>st</sup> crop of genetically modified (GM) maize on British soil. Environmental Secretary, Margaret Beckett, anticipates the public resistance, but feels the government needs to “proceed in the light of its desire to back and encourage UK research.” In previous public debates, citizens pushed for stronger information and some sort of regulatory regime controlling the experiments. A poll conducted just last year concluded more than 4 out of 5 people were against GM crops. The public did however acknowledge the potential benefits of GM technology for the future of developing countries. Beckett hopes that “opposition might eventually be worn down by solid, authoritative scientific argument.” The first crop to be grown is Bayer maize, which did well in the three year crop trials.

## McCall Farms



“This company is who we are.” McCall Swink made this simple, yet significant statement regarding the family backbone and history of McCall Farms during our interview. The family has been farming since 1838 and became a corporation when it started a canning company in 1954 in Effingham, South Carolina. For its first thirty-

two years, the company operated on a seasonal basis and by 1986 the company was canning year round. A new manufacturing plant was built in 1995. On their farm in Effingham they grow greens, peanuts, squash, tobacco, corn and other various products. The company has contracts with many farmers spreading from Florida to Pennsylvania. Today, 85% of the fresh produce that the company cans comes from contracted products not produced on McCall farmland. Thus, only 15% of the product canned in Florence comes from their farmland. Even though the company only farms 15% of what it cans, they feel that farming locally themselves is important to the logistics of the company and also in helping maintain a common knowledge when dealing with other farmers. Marion Swink pointed out that McCall Farms builds on success

in four main parts of the business: agriculture, finished final product, sales and marketing and efficiently running a small business.

Manufacturing versatility and offering a wide variety of products is one of their main strategies as a business. They strive to continually modify and expand on this objective. They pride their business on canning products from “Apples to Zucchini.” The company finds success with low volume and high margin items that are harder to manufacture and pack. This is significant to their development because they choose to center their products on those their competitors shy away from. This gives McCall Farms the edge on “canning” competitors by focusing on unique items such as boiled peanuts, squash and collard greens. For example, they are currently in the process of implementing an entire new concept in the sale of boiled peanuts. They will be one of the first to hit the market with this product in flexible pouches.

A significant amount of growth has taken place due to the numerous companies McCall Farms has acquired and put under its signature label “**Margaret Holmes**”. Some of the names that they have acquired over the years are Ruby Canning, Montene Morris, Harold Brothers, Holmes Canning, Kent Canning, Eberwine, Jones Bros., Cherokee product line with the Garcia label, Monticello and Peanut Patch Boiled Peanuts. In the future, this family owned business hopes to become a household trademark name that is affiliated with the one main product label of **Margaret Holmes**. Today there are four members of the family in the business. They are two brothers, Henry and Marion Swink and Henry’s two sons, McCall and Woody. Henry and Woody focus on sales and agriculture while Marion and McCall spend their time predominately in manufacturing. McCall Farms has a dedicated and admirable work force that the Swink’s are very proud of and feel fortunate to have. “It is the creative and talented people down here that truly make all of it happen” states McCall Swink. McCall Farms has built a strong foundation with the contributions of the past family members and employees. As the company looks to the future, they plan to expand on this solid base through new techniques and ideas to ensure its success into another generation.



Dr. John Rushing, our Executive Director is currently recovering nicely at home from recent by-pass surgery. All of us want to wish John a speedy and full recovery and we anticipate he will be back to work very soon. Having spoken briefly with John after surgery, it was evident he is feeling great and ready to get back to his routine as soon as his doctors give him the go ahead. If you want to contact John, he can be reached at home (919-362-9688) and his address is 306 Canon Gate Dr. Cary, NC 27511.

## All About Atkins

I am sure that the Atkins diet is familiar to you, or at least you have heard of the low carbohydrate craze that has swept over the United States and become the hottest diet trend of the decade. It is also causing some major changes/concerns in certain segments of the food industry. Over 40 million people around the world have joined in on the Atkins revolution. The diet works on four general principles: weight loss, weight maintenance, good health and disease prevention. It encourages one to eliminate sugar from your diet because it can lower the metabolic processes. Yet, recent research has shown that it is not a “piece of cake” to maintain this diet due to its potential health risks and capability to maintain a daily routine of eating mainly protein rich foods. So, how healthy is this diet for the body? The diet claims that one can lose weight on a high-fat, high-protein diet and a limited amount of simple carbohydrates. Carbohydrates make up more than 50% of Americans daily diets. Health experts say that cutting the amount of carbs consumed and moderate daily exercise can lead to a significant amount of weight loss. Yet this diet is linked to osteoporosis, stroke and coronary heart disease because of the lack of carbohydrates needed for energy and maintenance, and excessive consumption of high-fat foods. Obviously, there are mixed views on the overall effects that the diet has on the body.

Some benefits of the diet include a steady weight loss, reduced appetite, reduced intake of sugars and increased amounts of protein/fat consumed. On the other hand, it has its opposing side effects including a diet low in fiber and high in saturated fat. The American Heart Association does not recommend diets high in protein for weight loss and says Atkins has not been proven to sustain long-term weight loss. It restricts healthy foods that provide essential nutrients. So, before you jump on the Atkins bandwagon, consider a balance of a moderate amount of carbohydrates with sufficient protein in your daily diet to avoid potentially harmful side effects.

## Peanut Test Kits

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced at the end of 2003 that several methods for the detection of peanut proteins in cereal, cookies, ice cream, milk and chocolate were approved by the AOAC International. These test kits will provide an efficient method for the food processors to more readily detect the presence of peanuts in food not labeled as containing peanuts. Most importantly, it is a way of preventing these products from reaching consumers because nearly 7 million Americans have food allergies. Unlabeled food allergens have been the cause of the majority of food recalls in recent years. These kits are used to quickly determine if peanut residues exist anywhere in the production cycle, including processing, raw materials or final product. For more information on this detection method you can contact Neogen at [www.neogen.com](http://www.neogen.com).

## What's the Story on Fructose?

Have you started to question the use of high fructose corn syrup in your products lately or your consumption of it? Many people are. High fructose corn syrup is increasingly coming under attack and it appears to be just another “scape-goat” for our own personnel responsibilities in controlling our weight.

High fructose corn syrup is the leading sweetener in the United States today with 4.5 billion dollars worth sold each year. It first appeared on the scene in the United States in 1966. In the 1980's the production and sale of high fructose corn syrup exploded. In 2001 we consumed about 62.6 pounds per year per person. In many products where companies once used sucrose, they are now using high fructose corn syrup.

So what is the problem? Some research that is being conducted today involves feeding exclusively pure fructose with no other carbohydrates in the diet. They have found that pure fructose does not cause fat cells to release the hormone leptin, which in turn does not suppress another hormone ghrelin from the stomach, an appetizing suppressant. Consequently, the “logical” conclusion is that fructose increases hunger to make you eat more. As is often the case with tightly controlled research studies, consuming only fructose does not tell the whole story. Little of this data has been replicated in humans.

In the “real world” we consume many different types of carbohydrates other than fructose. Yes, fructose does take different metabolic pathways in our

body compared to glucose (dextrose), yet when sucrose, a disaccharide, is cleaved into fructose and glucose in its initial metabolic step, the same two molecules are available to the body as when one consumes high fructose corn syrup, which is roughly half fructose and half glucose.

I could go on about the intricacies of the various metabolic pathways fructose can take and resulting effects, but the take home message I am trying to make is that high fructose corn syrup in our every day diet is being unfairly compared to pure fructose when fed as the exclusive carbohydrate. This is hardly the case in the real world. When high fructose corn syrup replaces sugar (sucrose) in a product you still have the same two monosaccharides glucose and fructose to be metabolized.

The hysteria about the foods we eat will continue as long as man lives, or should I say as long as man continues to try to find something or someone else to blame for our own weaknesses. I have never talked to anyone who has lost weight and kept it off that did not accept the fact that it was their responsibility to control their own destiny and consequently did not blame someone else, i.e. the food industry. Maybe someday someone will actually say what's good about our diet, i.e. canned fruits and vegetables!

Bill Morris  
Editorial

## Food Fun Facts

- Cabbage is 91% water.
- The world's rarest coffee comes from Indonesia and costs \$300/lb!!
- In 1919, a molasses flood killed 21 people in Boston.
- The candy bar, "Baby Ruth" is named for the daughter of President Grover Cleveland, not the baseball player.
- **Tongue Twister:** the first bubble gum on the market was manufactured in 1906 and called "Blibber-Blubber."
- In Japan, the most popular topping for Domino's pizza is squid.
- If Americans saved an ounce of meat each day, we would save over 2 million cattle in a year.
- In 18<sup>th</sup> century Maine, lobster was known as a "poor man's food" and was commonly used as farm fertilizer.
- **Good Old Days:** A study done in 1971 concluded a family of 4 could eat well on a grocery budget of \$45-50 a week. Meals included steaks and seafood.



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