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FAPC-OSU student wins first place in competition at IFT

By Brooke Clay, FAPC Communications Graduate Assistant

(Stillwater, Okla. – June 23, 2009) An Oklahoma State University and Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products Center graduate student won top honors during the 2009 Institute of Food Technologists Annual Meeting held in Anaheim, Calif., June 6-9.

Kalpana Kushwaha, a Ph.D. candidate in food science, won the first place in the Z. John Ordal oral graduate student competition conducted by the IFT-Food Microbiology Division. She presented her research paper titled “*In vitro* and *In vivo* virulence analysis of strong and weakly adherent strains of *Listeria monocytogenes*.”

“This award is the one of the ultimate achievement for any food science student,” Kushwaha said. “I wish I could put it into words how proud and excited I am after receiving this award.”

Any national or international graduate students pursuing a degree in food science was eligible to participate in the IFT contests. The scientific program subpanel, alone, received more than 1,800 technical research paper abstracts. Each was reviewed by an average of four IFT members and the “best of the best” were selected to present oral presentations.

“My paper was selected as a top 5 finalist,” Kushwaha said. “I was able to present in Anaheim, and it was a great experience to learn that my work was recognized.”

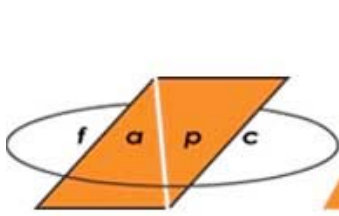
Kushwaha is not a stranger to prestigious awards. Her recent awards include first place poster at the 2007 IFT Food Microbiology Graduate Paper Competition, best poster at the 2008 FAPC/IFT-OK Research Symposium, best oral presentation at the 2009 FAPC/IFT-OK Research Symposium and second place in the poster competition for the Biochemistry & Molecular Biology Graduate Student Association’s Fifth Annual Graduate Research in Biological Sciences Symposium.

“It’s nice to see students get rewarded for the effort they’ve put into their research,” said Peter Muriana, FAPC food microbiologist. “Kalpana’s research may provide some new information regarding the importance, or rather, the potential seriousness of strong adherence among select strains of the foodborne pathogen, *Listeria monocytogenes*.”

“Her research indicates that the strongly adherent strains were more invasive in tissue culture assays and more virulent in live mouse assays, giving greater significance to strongly adherent strains of *L. monocytogenes* that may be found as contaminants in meat processing plants,” he said.

Kushwaha was awarded a certificate and a \$300 check during the Phi Tau Sigma awards breakfast during the IFT annual meeting.

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