

FAPC Workshop Focuses on "Real World" Marketing

By Mandy H. Gross

STILLWATER, Okla. – The Oklahoma Food and Agricultural Products Research and Technology Center hosted the first annual "Real World" Marketing Workshop to help Oklahomans market their small food businesses.

The purpose of the meeting was to help participants address marketing issues such as market identification, market research and market planning, said Jim Brooks, Center business marketing specialist and chair of the workshop.

"Our goal was to provide 'real world' marketing examples from business and industry professionals in the food-marketing industry," Brooks said. "We are planning to provide this workshop annually to those who are interested in starting their own small food or agricultural businesses. Hopefully, each year the workshop will get bigger and better."

Some of the topics that were discussed included basic marketing principles, building a brand, using a retail broker and food service broker, the value of packaging and labeling and perspectives of retail grocers and restaurateurs.

The workshop featured luncheon speaker Harry Coley, owner of Wild about Harry's. Wild about Harry's is an eating establishment located in Dallas, Texas that serves creamy frozen custard and award-winning hot dogs in a friendly atmosphere.

Coley talked about the challenges he faced while building his business and how he got where he is today.

Coley said the first day he opened his establishment, the air conditioner broke, and he had no money to fix it. He decided to close the store and reopen when the air conditioner was repaired.

"I told the Lord that if he would take this over, I'll do whatever he tells me to and never complain," Coley said. "Since then, it has turned around, and every month has been better than the last."

Today, Wild about Harry's is a popular place to eat and relax for many North Texans.

Other speakers included Barry Cook, Ben E. Keith Foods; Steve Long, Food Marketing Specialists; David Jackson, El Chico Restaurants; Collin Graham, Oklahoma Restaurant Association; Mark Harsha and Stacey Black, Harsha and Associates Advertising Agency; Braxton Close, WS Packaging Group; Gerald Cockerham, Associated Wholesale Grocers; Richard Kunze, Heartland Brokerage Co.; Charles Fowler, Consumers IGA; and Jim Hopper, Oklahoma Grocers Association.

Jannetta Glenn, one of the participants of the workshop from El Reno, Okla., said she enjoyed attending the workshop and thought it was very interesting.

"The 'real life' situations provided during the workshop were much more effective than the traditional teaching techniques," Glenn said.

Daniel Boone, another participant from Pawhuska, Okla., said the workshop helped him build contacts in the industry.

"It's nice to get this much information for such little cost so close to home," Boone said. "I like all the help that is so readily available to me in such a short amount of time in which it was presented."

For more information about the Center or other workshops the Center offers, visit www.fapc.okstate.edu or call (405) 744-6071.

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