Aramark Higher Education held a Marketing Innovation Day at New York University on June 15 to share ideas, discuss college and university foodservice trends and sample new products.

“It is a way for us to get all of the trends out to our managers,” said Monika Asaro, marketing manager with Aramark. “It is really a day that we can focus on being innovative. We want to get those new ideas and things that we see out to our managers.”

More than 50 marketing, administration and culinary professionals representing 14 Aramark schools in the Northeast attended the event.

The day included a mini-trade show featuring trends tables from several manufacturers, including J. Kings, Bunzl, Icelandic Seafood, Panache Cuisine, Code Blue and Purity Organic Juices.

Gregg Wallis, managing editor of On-Campus Hospitality, offered insight on some of the trends — both culinary and non-culinary — in higher-education food service. “We hear a lot from our readers about what they are doing on campus,” he said. “Things like comfort foods, healthier options and national brands are on trend right now. College and university food service remains a leader in the area of sustainability.”

In addition to the presentation from On-Campus Hospitality, organizers offered some of the trends they discovered on a culinary tour of New York City. Attendees were later broken out into groups and tasked to handle hypothetical situations on campus, including raising commuter meal plan participation and creating sustainability initiatives and an awareness campaign built around them.
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Brown Dining Services Wins Worm Farm

Brown University Dining Services in Providence, R.I. recently won the high school/college category in the Truck Farm Wicked Delicate Garden Contest.

“Two Yale grads, Ian Cheney and Curt Ellis, who just so happen to be sustainable foodies at heart, have become promoters of sustainable food to protect agriculture and the green jobs that accompany traditional farming practices; our food system; and a stronger connection to how food is grown,” said Gina Guiducci, administrative dietitian at Brown. “Hence the birth of Truck Farm—a farm grown in the bed of an old Dodge that was not only an idea for a documentary film (King Corn), but also a means of educating consumers.”

In an effort to prove (or try to prove) that food really can be grown anywhere, Cheney and Ellis, during their travels during Earth Week, announced the contest. They visited Brown on April 22.

The team from Brown, led by Guiducci, created a portable farm using a shopping cart welded to a bicycle. The garden-growing team coordinated meeting times, acquired materials and seedlings, and began building the garden bed, while being mindful of proper drainage and promoting a comfortable environment for future food. “We were ambitious with the amount of food we planned to grow, and soon learned that hearty squash and tomatoes ruled the roost next to peas and cucumbers,” she said.

They had to work as quickly as possible to do the plantings. “We had until June 1 (the garden contest entry deadline) to grow our luscious ‘Greens on the Go’ and submit the documentation of our garden project to be judged by notables in the [sustainable] food world—Michael Pollan, Alice Waters and Marion Nestle,” Guiducci said. “We were humbled by the recognition and selection of our bicycle garden as a winner.”

Worms were the prize for winning the contest. “We are going to use them to fertilize our garden, and we also plan to donate most of our friendly fertilizers to the Brown Student Garden to help fertilize their soil and compost,” she said. “We foresee the future of this food having a mini harvest, celebrity appearances at our farmer’s market in the fall, and perhaps incorporation into curricula for classes this summer. We encourage students to think about their food and how it’s grown and hope we inspire the urban gardener in all of you as we were inspired by Truck Farm—it’s infectious!”
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The Sodexo Foundation, the anti-hunger charitable arm of Sodexo, Inc., named eight Sodexo employees as “Heroes of Everyday Life” for their exemplary efforts fighting hunger in America. Four employees come from college and university food service.

“‘The concept of economic recovery is very theoretical for the one in eight Americans who are facing the very real prospect of going to bed without knowing where their next meal is coming from,’” said Stephen J. Brady, president of the Sodexo Foundation. “We honor these Sodexo employees who are giving so much of their time, their talent and from their own pockets to offer real solutions to help people for whom hunger is a real, daily concern.”

Those honored include:

Paul Belski, general manager at Endicott College in Beverly, Mass. for organizing two canned food drives annually that have collected more than 2,000 pounds of canned goods and approximately $1,500 for needy local families, and for repacking enough surplus food for 39 meals every day for the last five years.

James Brown, general manager at Hillsborough Community College in Tampa, Fla., who, along with his wife, has dedicated more than 850 hours to help the less fortunate in their community by donating, preparing, transporting and delivering enough food for nearly 6,000 meals.

Thomas Jackson, chef at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah, has spent more than 17 years helping at-risk youth and others in need of food, clothing and toiletries.

Theresa Morris, catering supervisor at the University of Louisville in Kentucky, who has, for nearly 20 years, helped rescue 24,000 pounds of surplus food, providing tens of thousands of meals for those at risk of hunger.

Others honored include:

Dale Draper, housekeeper at Clarian Arnett Health in Lafayette, Ind.; Anne McDevitt, general manager at Kroontje Healthcare Center in Blacksburg, Va.; Patricia Medley, kitchen manager at Salem-Keizer School District in Salem, Ore.; and Dennis Shepherd, driver at USMC East Coast Camp Lejeune in North Carolina.

What started as a simple conversation between a student and Marla Poterack, foodservice director at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Mich., has turned into an annual special event at the school.

In passing, a student mentioned to Poterack that Dr. Edward Balog, president of Aquinas, loves to cook and is a self-branded “foodie.” With that little tidbit of information, the idea for a great dining hall pace changer was born.

Poterack set up a meeting with Dr. Balog and presented him with her idea: change President Balog into Chef Balog for a day. Balog’s response was an immediate and enthusiastic yes.

Tim Ruehs, executive chef at the college, met with Balog to plan the presidential feast for the student body. Balog created the menu by pulling in his favorite recipes to prepare for his family — crab cakes, chicken Florentine in a white wine sauce and sweet corn with red peppers.

“President Balog was a natural as Chef Balog,” said Poterack. “He possessed the knife skills, knowledge of flavor profiles and confidence necessary to work well in a commercial kitchen.”

One very large difference, however, were the adjusted food amounts. To accommodate the number of diners on campus, Ruehs took a meal that in totality might weigh in at 10 pounds for a family of four, and adjusted it as follows: 350 crab cakes with Dijon mustard aioli; 375 chicken Florentine servings topped with two gallons of white wine beurre blanc; 100 pounds of Yukon potatoes; and 38 pounds of sweet corn with red peppers.

Students lined up early, ready to enjoy a dinner prepared by the head of their campus. The event was such a success that it is already on the books for the 2010-2011 academic year.
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When Jon Plodzik, director of dining at the University of New Hampshire in Durham, wanted to ask TV Chef Mary Ann Esposito to be a special guest, he had a surprising way of finding her.

“She is a local Durham resident,” he said. “I said, ‘I bet we can look her up in the phone book.’ Sure enough there she was. Her husband was a local physician here. I figured she had to be around here somewhere.”

Esposito, who is host and creator of “Ciao Italia with Mary Ann Esposito,” which has been on the air since 1989 and is America’s longest-running cooking program, had previously visited the campus about eight years prior to this visit.

“We really wanted to do something with someone with some notoriety in the campus community,” said Plodzik. “She certainly does because she does a lot of stuff in the local area. She was very amenable to come over. We tried to play off some of the stuff in her new cookbook, which celebrates her simpler recipes. They all have about five ingredients. That’s all. We thought it had some application with the students.”

While on campus, Esposito taped an episode of her show, with University President Mark W. Huddleston and his wife Emma Bricker serving as her assistants. “We filmed it right on location, right here in Stillings Hall,” said Plodzik. “We had a little stage put up with lights and her producer came and was following her all day long. They cooked up a couple of dishes while students were watching it. We haven’t been told yet when it is scheduled to air.”

Prior to the taping, a lunch was served to students at Philbrook Hall. “We tried to embed one of her recipes into each one of our stations,” he said. “We had a prosciutto pine nut pizza, the grill had stuffed flounder and Home Cooking had some really nice stuff as well. I wanted her to be able to wander around, and that is really what she wanted to do anyway. It worked out well.”

Students enjoyed the visit. “We put it out on Facebook that if you signed up for a cookbook, she would autograph it for you,” said Plodzik. “We gave out about 150 cookbooks free as part of the event.”

Plodzik was also very pleased with the event. “She is very engaging. She is the perfect little Italian grandmother. She said she would love to do it again.”

Recipe Update

In the July issue of On-Campus Hospitality, the recipe for Grilled Scallops on p. 64 was incorrect. For the correct recipe, please visit www.oncampushospitality.com
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