

Briefs

Bush establishes import safety group

WASHINGTON—In the wake of tainted imports from seasonings to toothpaste, President Bush established the Import Safety Working Group July 18 to improve the safety of imported food products.

The group will work with both importers and exporters to find ways to better guarantee the safety of food and other products shipped into the United States, according to White House statement.

Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt serves as chair of the group. Other members include the Secretary of State, Secretary of the Treasury, Attorney General, Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of Commerce, Secretary of Transportation, Secretary of Homeland Security, director of the Office of Management and Budget, U.S. Trade Representative, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and the chairman of the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The panel is expected to report its recommendations to the president in 60 days, reported *The Associated Press*.

FDA, European agency cooperate on food safety

WASHINGTON—Marking their first formal agreement, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the European Food Safety Authority signed the first U.S./European agreement in the area of assessing food safety risk July 2. The agreement is designed to facilitate the sharing of confidential scientific and other information between EFSA and the FDA, such as methodologies, to ensure that food is safe.

"Food safety knows no national boundaries and the food chain is today truly a global one," said Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle, EFSA's executive director, in a prepared FDA statement. "We need to work with the best scientific minds from across the world and extend scientific co-operation to assess food safety risks and protect consumers even more. Sharing data and knowledge across our two organizations is an important first step in achieving this goal." This is also the first formal international cooperation agreement EFSA has signed.

According to the FDA statement, the formal agreement ensures appropriate protection of such confidential information under the applicable legal frameworks in both the United States and the European Union.

Correction

Michele Buster of Sini Fulvi/Forever Cheese was misquoted in the *Cheese Source Book* in the June issue. "There seems to be less raw goat, so (being one of the importers to carry it) perks people up," she said.

**Mediterranean diet hits the mark**

By ANNA WOLFE

BOSTON—First there was the Mediterranean Diet pyramid. Now there's the Med Mark. Designed to help consumers quickly identify foods and drinks that support the Mediterranean diet, Oldways Preservation and Trust unveiled Med Mark packaging symbol here June 5.

The postage-stamp-sized packaging symbol features an amphora, the pottery jug used for 3,000 years by all Mediterranean cultures to store and ship their foods and drinks. Products that meet the standards derived from the traditional Mediterranean diet will be able to license the stamp for their packaging.

Courtney Davis, media relations manager for Oldways, said the Med Mark should begin appearing on products later this summer.

"Through the years, our experience confirms that consumers respond to messages that simplify shopping and clear the clutter of competing and confusing nutritional information," said Dun Gifford, Oldways president, in a prepared statement. "The

Mediterranean diet is backed by strong science and terrific flavors and now with the Med Mark, consumers can easily find these health-promoting products."

The Med Mark is the third element of a consumer shopping-assistance program from Oldways, the non-profit food think tank based here.

To help shoppers find whole grains, Oldways organized the Whole Grains Council in 2003 and the Whole Grain Stamp, which now appears on more than 1,200 whole grain products.

Another program, the Latino Nutrition Coalition, produced a pocket-sized brochure for Latino shoppers called *Camino Magico*, or Magic Road, that helps Latinos shop and eat healthier.

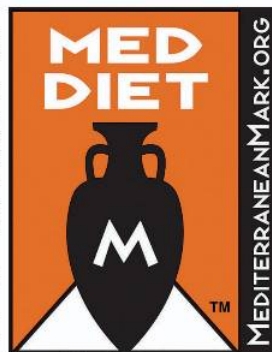
As part of a yearlong roll out, the *Camino Magico* was launched in May in Houston

with the help of Fiesta Supermarkets. On July 15, the *Camino Magico* was launched in Chicago at health fairs and festival—at the Jewel-Osco supermarket booth, explained Davis. A PDF version of the

eating guide is available for download at www.latinonutrition.org.

In 1993, Oldways created the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid, in conjunction with colleagues from the Harvard School of Public Health and the World Health Organization. Since then, this traditional diet has consistently been judged to be the "gold standard" of healthy eating.

For more information about the Mediterranean diet pyramid, including scientific studies and recipes, visit www.MediterraneanMark.org. **GN**



This symbol will begin appearing on approved products in late summer.

Retailers learn to tap into growing organic market

By KATIE GALLAGHER

NEW YORK—Organic convenience is an emerging trend, and Sylvia Tawse of The Fresh Ideas Group, Boulder, Colo., informed retailers how to tap into this growing market during a seminar titled *Organic and Convenient: How to Make it Happen* held at the Fancy Food Show

here July 9.

Tawse began by identifying key consumers of organic products and warned retailers to leave their stereotypes at the door. "The days when organic consumers were the hippies among us are over," she said.

"Today, the organic consumers are parents and those focused on lifestyle and values, which is why today's and tomorrow's trends really matter."

Trends consumers are falling into include the foodie trend, a lifestyle in which consumers enjoy trying new foods; the

proactive health trend, in which consumers are looking for healthy foods that may improve their lifestyles; the eco-business and green living trend, which includes the environmentally conscious consumer; and the time deprivation trend, in which

consumers are time-starved and looking for an easy solution.

Tawse, president and founder of the public relations firm for the natural food and product industry, was quick to tell retailers that the organic market is growing at 15.7 percent a

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TEA SUPPLIERS SHAKE IT AT EXPO

ATLANTA—Winners of the Fourth Annual Iced Tea Shake-Off Competition were announced at The World Tea Expo at the Georgia World Congress Center here June 9-11.

Tea companies entered their teas and blends into the competition in three categories: Commercially Brewed, Ready-to-Drink and Freestyle. Industry experts judged participants on taste, presentation, technique and creativity.

Commercially Brewed Teas, made in front of judges, presented in glasses

- Best Black Tea: Art of Tea, Classic Black
- Best Flavored Black Tea: Mighty Leaf, Ginger Peach
- Best Green Tea: Golden Moon, Coconut Pouchong
- Best Value: Walters Bay

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Allergen-free market is nothing to sneeze at

By ANNA WOLFE

NEW YORK—With 20 to 25 percent annual growth, the allergen-free market is one of the hottest areas in the specialty food arena. That's what Don Montuori, vice president of publishing for Market Research Group, told attendees at the What's New In the Allergen-Free Market seminar at the Fancy Food Show here July 8.

While the overall food market is \$600 billion, the allergy-free market is forecasted to reach \$5 billion in 2008

vs. \$16 billion for the organic market, Montuori said, citing statistics gathered by the Rockville, Md.-based publisher of market research, including *Packaged Facts*. While it is "smaller dollars, there's greater growth opportunity in the allergy-free, especially the gluten-free market," Montuori pointed out.

Market drivers include the increasing number of consumers diagnosed with food allergies, and the moniker "—free" gives foods a clean status. Since the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer

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