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Culinary institute features produce in Worlds of Flavor

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Street food and comfort food from around the world were the focuses of the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone's recent Worlds of Flavor Conference — and fresh produce played a big part.







"Produce was used in nearly every presentation in one way or another as an ingredient, since the rest of the world has produce as a primary ingredient with right-sized proteins," said Stuart McAllister, director of marketing for foodservice at Dole Food Co., Westlake Village, Calif., a sponsor of the conference.

The nearly 700 attendees of the conference, many of them chefs, culinary directors and volume foodservice buyers, spent Nov. 12-14 in St. Helena, Calif., hearing from presenters with expertise in Mediterranean, Asian, Latin American and American cuisine.

In addition to spending time in the institute's kitchen classrooms watching demonstrations from Rick Bayless, Alex Ong and other chefs with regional specialties, attendees were also hosted by sponsor companies during the marketplace events, where they could have consulting chefs serve signature dishes using their ingredients.

Sponsors of the event included:

- National Mango Board, Orlando, Fla.
- California Avocado Commission, Irvine
- Mexican Hass Avocado Importers Association, Miami
- Dole
- U. S. Potato Board, Denver
- California Raisin Marketing Board, Fresno
- Almond Board of California, Modesto

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Courtesy Culinary Institute of America
Presenting chef Alex Ong, managing partner of Betelnut in San Francisco, prepares a dish during the kitchen workshop session at the Culinary Institute of America's Worlds of Flavor event.

The U.S. Potato Board was represented by Jose Luis Ugalde, chef and owner of Café Gibraltar and Chez Shea, both near Half Moon Bay, Calif.

He served a Spanish-inspired braised russet potato dish with lemony calamari, a Turkish dish with potato varieties and a crispy panko-covered potato cake filled with pulled pork with a plum sauce topping, said Kathleen Triou, vice president of domestic marketing for the board.

"Because the theme was around street foods, we were excited about how many of them incorporate potatoes," Triou said. "Potatoes are incorporated across the globe."

The California Avocado Commission is working on following up with foodservice operators from the show on some of the innovative uses of California avocados, so that there will be new, promotable dishes during the next season, said Jan DeLyser, vice president of marketing for the commission.

"The sampling phase is perfect for discussing the dishes, their origins and applications for fresh California avocados with the attendees," DeLyser said. "The versatility of fresh avocados were featured in chef presentations, and served as breakfast smoothies and as a timbale with crab and potato at a morning break."

The National Mango Board was at the conference for the first time, and found the experience to be quite valuable.

"The conference is attended by many chefs and foodservice operators, and the demographics of the attendees are very different — from chains to universities to small business owners with one or more restaurants in their hometown," said Megan McKenna, marketing specialist for the board. "It was a great opportunity to speak with all of these foodservice professionals and find out their future needs using fresh mango, and how we can help them create new, craveable menu ideas."

McKenna said green mango was used in the general session demonstration by chef Christine Manfield of Australia, who demonstrated a pork salad with mango. Attendees were also served crispy shrimp with mango during the conference, she said.

Dole also showcased its mango products with a mango sticky rice and in smoothies. This was the first year the company sponsored the Worlds of Flavor conference, but McAllister said Dole was at the annual Produce First! conference last January, and plans to sponsor the upcoming conference Jan. 23.

Produce First! is a smaller conference following two days of Worlds of Healthy Flavors, which is hosted by the Harvard School of Public Health as well as the culinary institute. These smaller conferences include the Market Basket Experience, which puts chefs in the kitchen with sponsors and with foodservice operators for half a day, and allow them to work together on a menu using the sponsors' products.