

Health and Wellness a Key Focus of SIAL

An interview with Jane Dummer, president and founder of Jane Dummer RD Food Consulting

How are health concerns transforming food manufacturing today?

Aging vibrantly and healthily is important to both Generation Xers and Baby Boomers. They are pioneering how aging looks as we move into a new decade — 2020. Digestive health continues to be top of mind across all markets and all age groups, but especially for these two groups. Shelf-stable probiotics have become more popular ingredients, and we will see innovative food and beverage products promoting both the benefits of prebiotic and probiotic ingredients. Healthy hydration is important to both target markets of Gen Xers and Boomers, along with premium and quality ingredients and food for cognition, skin health and energy/fitness health.

The shift in plant-based eating is leading to more consumption of plant-based proteins, including seeds, nuts and pulses. Alternative categories have evolved out of the plant-based and the “free-from” dietary trends. Millennials make up one of the largest consumers of the alternative categories. These include meat, dairy, spreads, and ingredients like flours, and sugars. With the success of oat milk last year, I predict growth in all alternative categories especially dairy and spreads.

Where do you see this ultimately leading?

Health and wellness continues to be a trending interest across all target markets from Generation Zs to Baby Boomers. This is excellent news for food companies innovating and/or expanding in the better-for-you sector. Food and beverage manufacturers are finding the need to innovate faster and more often to meet health and dietary choices of their customers. Health and wellness is no longer dedicated to a few

aisles in the centre of the grocery store. With many better-for-you products appealing to all cohorts from Gen Zs to Baby Boomers, plus the availability of e-commerce, health-conscious consumers want products that taste good, meet their health states (depending on their stage of life) and have value-added benefits such as customizable, premium ingredients, sustainably sourced, and an authentic brand story.

If consumers can't find the products they want on the retailer's shelf, they will easily turn to ecommerce or food service (mobile ordering and third-party deliveries have made this option a common solution) to get the products and meals they prefer. We are seeing progressive small to mid-sized food and beverage companies compete in the better-for-you space. Often these companies are more agile and can pivot faster than the traditional large multinationals to meet consumers' changing behaviours.

What can visitors to SIAL expect to see in terms of these trends?

SIAL visitors can expect to see more product launches and innovations for the health-conscious consumer. Plus, additional conferences and panels dedicated to health and wellness. As the Health Expert in the SIAL Hub, I will be leading four panel discussions including: 1) Why Consider the Health Tribes; 2) Sustainability 2.0; 3) The Alternative Markets (meat, dairy, flour, spreads and sugar); and 4) What's New for Healthy Aging. Attendees can expect to get an overview of each topic, with strategic insights, key opportunities and drivers for food companies to innovate, increase sales and grow their businesses in the health and wellness space.

What I find interesting is last year's winner of SIAL Canada's Innovation



Contest was vegan keto buns from Unbun Keto Foods. The other two finalists were Yummy Doh for its vegan cookie dough that is safe to eat raw or can be baked into cookies and Lofbergs Canada for its oat-based coffee drink called ICE. All these products have attributes within the health trends. I'm curious to see if it will be the same for SIAL Canada's Innovation Contest 2020.

Will plant-based products be a big part of the SIAL mix?

Yes, the appeal of plant-based eating has expanded over the past two years, including a much larger market of consumers (rather than only vegans and vegetarians) who are opting for flexitarian diet pattern (choosing more plant-based meal options while still consuming meat) or are just taste curious both at home and on-the-go. The shift in plant-based eating and the need for convenience led to launches in Foodservice and Retail from Beyond Meats, Impossible Foods and Litalife Foods in 2019.

This year, I'm envisioning the launch of more minimally processed plant-based products with shorter ingredients lists, along with more blends of traditional meat and dairy with plant ingredients. For example, a traditional pork sausage mixed with a blend of beets and other natural plant-based ingredients provides an improved nutritional profile, vibrant colour and interesting texture for both the health-conscious and the taste curious. ●