

Celebrating Spring Chickens

KAREN LANGHAUSER, Editor-in-Chief, and KRYSTAL GABERT, Associate Editor, Food Manufacturing

We just returned from the 2010 International Poultry Expo (IPE), known affectionately — though somewhat inaccurately — around Food Manufacturing headquarters as “the chicken show.” Attendance at this year’s expo jumped considerably from last January, suggesting that perhaps after some belt-tightening, food manufacturers may be in the beginning stages of reassessing their budgets and preparing to buy new equipment.

Perhaps most encouraging was the continued innovation on the part of exhibiting vendors. While the Food Manufacturing editors were somewhat disappointed that, for the first time in years of attending the show, we did not come home bearing chicken-themed Mardi Gras beads, we did have a chance to see some of the latest products available to the poultry industry.



KAREN LANGHAUSER, Editor-in-Chief, Food Manufacturing

My favorite part of trade shows is stumbling upon exhibitors who appear to have completely original products. Fortunately for Krystal and me, this year’s IPE had a healthy dose of innovation. And while it’s true that not all new ideas meet with wild success, all common practices in the industry were once novel approaches.

For example, Elite Forming Design Solutions had a new product on the show floor called Shape-A-Matic. This piece of equipment is designed to increase profitability and decrease waste — can’t argue with that. All poultry processors are looking for ways to maximize profit by more efficiently using each piece of deboned meat. Portioning is clearly a challenge in the industry, since each piece of meat varies in size, shape and thickness.

From what I’ve seen, most portioning is done using high-pressure water jets. Leftover meat can some times be used by a processor for formed products or sold as “trim,” which yields a lower price than whole pieces of meat.

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The Shape-A-Matic is unique in that it neither uses water jet systems, nor produces trim. The machine shapes logs of deboned meat into the desired form (butterfly or tender, for example) and then slices them into the desired product weight. No trim. No waste. Portion sizes are exact, too, which is both convenient and economical.



KRYSTAL GABERT, Associate Editor, Food

Manufacturing

This was my first year in Atlanta for IPE, and it was interesting to see the various products available for poultry processors. The most interesting booth I visited was BRAE Rainwater Technologies. Rainwater harvesting is a fairly simple concept — collecting runoff from the roofs of buildings and repurposing it for gray water applications.

Though the company installs its product primarily for agricultural applications thus far, BRAE is working to ensure that the product meets various state safety standards for food-processing applications, and is beginning to develop its product for commercial food-manufacturing purposes.

At a time when the public is beginning to take note of what experts have been calling “the global water shortage,” a product like this could really help food manufacturers turn what is a water-heavy industry into one that more sustainably uses its resources. Putting rainwater to use would also save manufacturers the cash needed to deal with runoff — not to mention the savings in water utility bills.

This product is so appealing because it’s a simple idea — use the water we already have before sourcing more. If BRAE is able to complete the development of this product for plant applications, it has the potential to help manufacturers turn a hassle like runoff management into a cost-saving process, while also conserving natural resources and protecting the environment.

It is reassuring to see that recessions don’t always mean certain death for

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innovation. While most companies are struggling to stay afloat, many of them still take the time to recognize that new ideas are not only attractive, but also compulsory in an industry that wants to move forward.

How are you moving forward? We'd love to hear it, so feel free to drop one of us a line at karen.langhauser@advantagemedia.com [1] or krystal.gabert@advantagemedia.com [2].

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