Ice Cream Cone Wins Food Product Development Competition

MANHATTAN, Kan. (AScribe Newswire) — A gluten-free flavored waffle cone developed by two Kansas State University graduate students is the first-place winner in an international product development competition.

K-State's Angela Dodd, a master's student in food science, Carrington, N.D., and Melissa Daniel, doctoral student in animal sciences, Cypress Inn, Tenn., took first place at the recent International American Association of Cereal Chemists' Product Development Competition. The K-State duo earned a cash prize of $2,550 for their creation of the Gluten-free Fun Flavored Waffle Cone.

It is the second year in a row that a K-State student team has won the competition. This year's even was Sept. 13-16 in Baltimore, Md.

Participants in the contest had to develop an original food product containing at least one major cereal ingredient.

Dodd said their gluten-free waffle cone is made with brown rice flour instead of traditional wheat flours. It was created in four flavors: vanilla, chocolate, strawberry and cinnamon.

The idea for the product came about because of Celiac disease. People with the disease can't consume wheat products because they are unable to digest the gluten protein that is commonly found in wheat, barley and rye, Dodd said.

"Taking wheat out of the product allows people who have Celiac disease to be able to eat these waffle cones," she said.

The initial product was developed by Daniel and two other students for the research and development of food products course taught by K-State's Fadi Aramouni, professor of food science, and Kelly Getty, assistant professor of food science. The two other students were Ochandilu Cooper, who earned a master's in food science from K-State in August 2009, and Jared Fish, who earned a bachelor's in food science and industry in May 2009.

After the course was over, Daniel decided to take the product further. She was paired with Dodd by Aramouni for the competition because of their complementary strengths in different areas that would be vital in further development of the product.

Daniel said the main task in getting the product ready for the competition was converting the wet ingredients into a dry mix. Dodd said this meant a lot of experimentation with the actual product.

For the competition, the pair also had to prepare a chemical and physical analysis of the waffle cones, formulate a marketing plan, create a prototype of the packaging and more.

"You pretty much had to act like you were starting up a company," Dodd said. "You had to go through all the processing and make flow diagrams. You had to think of all the food-safety aspects of the product and how you would incorporate those food-safety implications into a factory."

At the actual competition, Daniel and Dodd competed against four other teams from around the continental U.S. by giving a 10-minute presentation to the judges, creating a product display, providing a taste test and participating in a question-and-answer session with the judges.

"I am very excited about this achievement," Daniel said about winning the competition. "Initially, I was just in shock but as it soaked in, I realized what an honor it is to win a contest of this sort. Winning this contest is not only a nice addition to my resume, but has enabled me to better understand the processes involved in product development."

Dodd said they are looking at taking their Gluten-free Fun Flavored Waffle Cones to a specialty market for gluten-free products.

Daniel said that their success in the competition would not have been possible without the support and guidance of K-State faculty and the help of K-State's Food Science Institute.

"There have been several K-State students to win product development contests over the past several years," Daniel said. "I think this just reflects that the professors at K-State, especially Dr. Getty and Dr. Aramouni, are very knowledgeable about product development and are excellent at helping students excel nationally in these contests. Plus, it shows what a supportive K-State Food Science Institute we have to aid students in these endeavors."

The Food Science Institute facilitates training of traditional and nontraditional undergraduate and graduate students; supports basic and applied research initiatives; and provides technical and scientific information to consumers, the food industry and governmental agencies.

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