

## **Breaking News on Food & Beverage Development - North America**

### **The whole foods movement: 'Age of the unthinkable' for processed foods?**

By Caroline Scott-Thomas, 05-Apr-2011

**American consumers are rejecting processed and functional foods and embracing whole foods – and industry needs to react with innovative formulation, according to a presentation at the recent Nutracon conference.**

Speaking at the Nutracon conference in Anaheim, California last month, CEO and president of Blue Pacific Flavors Donald Wilkes said that the future of food formulation lies in clean labels and nutritious, whole food ingredients. Wilkes predicts that concern about food from farm to table will intensify, as part of what he calls 'the whole foods movement'. And he suggested that with an increased interest in whole foods and whole ingredients, the supplements industry could also find itself in a difficult position.

*"The processed food industry, and anything that has a functional ingredient, is under question from consumers right now, and it's not going away; it's only going to get bigger,"* Wilkes said. *"...I think today is the age of the unthinkable for the processed food industry, unless the industry reacts."*

#### **Think simple**

He urged food manufacturers to move toward simpler products, and to communicate health benefits of foods and supplements within the context of a whole-food based, balanced diet, and an exercise regime.

*"So many food manufacturers want to put structure/function claims on food products these days, but it is a barrier to consumption,"* he said. *"People don't want their diet to be a medicine chest...If you want to talk about health benefits, talk about them as part of health and wellness, rather than death and disease."*

#### **Fear factor**

Wilkes said that the large number and broad scope of food and supplement recalls in recent years has been a major factor behind consumers' move back toward whole foods, spurring fear of the processed food industry. Despite the recent passage of the Food Safety Modernization Act, fear of processed foods and food ingredients is not going away any time soon, he said.

Another major driver of the whole foods movement has been consumer advocacy via the internet, Wilkes said.

*"The internet is the pulpit for whole foods,"* he said. *"It educates, but it also misinforms."*

#### **Whole food creativity**

Nevertheless, the general model that is emerging for healthy eating is about going back to basics, with whole, healthy foods, colorful plant foods and nutrient-dense foods.

*"Companies, even in the ingredients business, can invent...There are ways to deal with it but it needs a certain amount of ingenuity and creativity."*

Wilkes cited successful and innovative food brands that have managed to find a way to capitalize on the whole foods focus, including Häagen Dazs, Minute Maid Simply Orange, and Mamma Chia whole chia seed beverage.

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