

York chefs clean up

Chefs from York University came home smiling after Hospitality 2007 at the NEC in January. The highlight of the event was the competitions in which chefs from across the hospitality industry competed to demonstrate their skill and ingenuity. Andrew Wood (below right) and Simon Woods (below left) from York University, both won medals, proving that chefs in university catering are truly at the forefront of the industry.

Andrew won a silver medal in the Steelite International Competition and his colleague Simon Woods won Gold in the Tilda Chef of the Year competition.

Andrew said "We are really thrilled to have won the Tilda Chef of the Year two years running, and more importantly come away with awards representing not only York University but the university sector in general. It's a great motivational tool to be able to go away and compete at the likes of the live theatre at the NEC." Another fabulous victory for university catering!



DAVID RUSSELL CONTINUES TO DEMYSTIFY THE FOOD BUSINESS.

Technical terms



A mention of the word 'additive' and we conjure up images of hyperactivity and a barrage of technical terms, what is it that they all mean?

ANTIOXIDANTS

Foods rich in fat, like sausages and vegetable oils, go rancid if left to their own devices. Antioxidants slow down this process. Vitamin E is an effective antioxidant.

COLOURINGS

There are three types of colours used in foods. Natural colours, like the bright orange beta carotene from carrots, or the red colour cochineal from the female coccus cacti beetle. There are so-called 'inorganic pigments' made from metals like silver, and finally there are synthetic 'azo' dyes like the yellow colouring quinoline yellow (E104). In the US and Switzerland they are banned as they have been linked to triggering hyperactivity and asthma in some children.

EMULSIFIERS

Oil and water usually do not mix. The way to get them to do so is to add an emulsifier. When making a mayonnaise oil and vinegar are held together by adding an egg. It is a 'lecithin' in eggs which has this power to keep the two ingredients held together. Agar in seaweed is another natural emulsifier.

FLAVOURINGS

There are over 4,100 flavouring agents used in food but when it comes to the label the manufacturer only has to write the word 'flavouring'. There are four main types of flavourings allowed in the UK, natural flavourings, a

mix of natural and synthetic flavourings, smoke flavourings and artificial or chemical flavourings.

HUMECTANTS

These additives help to absorb moisture in a food, which in turn helps to stop the growth of moulds. For example, honey, sorbitol, or glycerine, found in royal icing.



PRESERVATIVES

Foods go off because micro-organisms, bacteria and fungi take hold and start growing on and in the food, through oxidation – cut apple goes brown when exposed to oxygen and enzymes naturally present in a food can make it go off. In addition to the naturally occurring preservatives of vinegar, salt and, dare I say it, sugar, there are 30 preservatives allowed in our foods and drinks substances like sulphur dioxide, used to coat dried fruit and benzoic acid added to fruit juices.

SEQUESTRANTS

Traces of metals like iron and copper occur naturally in food and can cause oxidation. Sequestrants are substances that latch on to these traces and make them inactive.

STABILISERS

Emulsifiers and thickeners like agar and carob gums can also have a slightly different role as stabilisers, helping, for example, to stabilise and maintain the texture of meringues and marshmallows.