

J'can Cuisine Enjoys Success

Several Jamaican foods and beverages were the highlight of the recent three-day Americas Food and Beverage Show and conference, which was held at the Miami Beach Conference Centre.

The show, which attracted more than 4,500 local and international foodservice professionals including retailers, distributors, and import and export agents, also gave participants the opportunity to enhance their businesses, while learning of the latest industry trends. There was a high demand from foreign buyers for canned ackee as distributors and retailers flocked Jamaica's booth expressing their interest in the unique product, as well as the country's national dish. The Jamaican beverage "Taboo" produced by VAP Limited in St. Catherine was among the wide assortment of energy drinks that captivated the audience, proving popular with a large audience at all times for sampling. Joy Thomas, Market Manager, Grace Foods USA, indicated that the recently launched Grace frozen dinners were also a success throughout the event. The selection of jerk chicken, jerk shrimps and curried chicken presented an authentic taste of Jamaican cuisine, she added. As a result of the positive impact at the event, Grace Foods is currently in the process of widening distribution of the new product, as well as increasing consumer awareness in foreign markets. Berletta Forrester, Manager Export Promotion of Jamaica Trade & Invest (JTI), told JIS that the Jamaican food products generated a very positive response from the nearly 4,500 participants across the Western Hemisphere. Several aisles were adorned with new and tasty foods and beverages from more than 20 countries. Samplings were represented from Asia, South and Central America, Europe, Africa, and North America. JTI would now work with companies in strengthening their industry contacts, looking at means to increase visibility of Jamaican products and new trends in packaging and also identify distribution channels for those items. Exotic Caribbean flavours, including coconut water, were showcased by Grace Foods USA, while other participating Jamaican companies had samplings of coffee, and other local Jamaican food items such as jerk seasonings, sauces, and baked products. Other Jamaican companies displaying products included Seprod Limited, West Best Foods Limited, Honey Bun Limited, Caribbean Flavours, Country Traders, Blue Ribbon Manufacturing, Falcon Marketing, and CANCO. Miami-based LEASA Industries, manufacturers of pre-packaged vegetable items and Tower Isles Frozen Foods, manufacturers and distributors of pre-packaged patties, were two participating exhibitors owned by Jamaican nationals resident in the United States. Several networking sessions were part of the three-day agenda, which included seminars on sales, negotiating principles, taking advantage of export/import assistance programmes, identifying and utilising health product trends in rapidly changing market, as well as regulations in the food and beverage industry. Source: JIS