

NRA 2008 Observations

By Mike Colburn, President, Ideas Well Done LLC

A treasure hunt: That's what trade shows are for me today. NRA is always fertile ground for hunting. As a consultant and later as a manufacturer, I had particular needs to meet when I attended trade shows but the needs I meet now are different. I'm looking at what manufacturers are doing in terms of innovation, clever design, new ideas, new products, or an interesting twist on an old product. I can take the time to get beyond the sales spiel and study the engineering and the concepts behind the engineering. Below are a few of the "pieces of eight" I uncovered at NRA 2008.

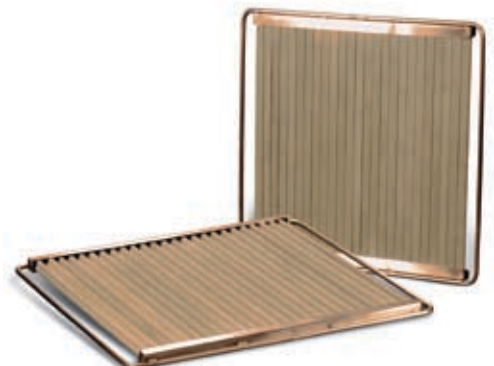
- **Turbo Chef** was out in a big way with Chef Demos and multiple models of batch and conveyor ovens. Their booth activities were very professionally done, including sit-down audience sampling menus in the high style European way (without the wine). Also impressive was their new literature with separate pieces for different industry segments. www.turbochef.com
- **Autowraptec** celebrated its second NRA. Introduced last year at the show, the silverware wrapping system claims a reduced costs average of over \$5,000 per machine per year vs. wrapping silverware with napkins by hand. And there's the sanitary improvement. The device sanitizes silverware and wraps it in a napkin with a paper band to seal it. See a demo at www.autowraptec.com/demo.html.
- **Cool Tube, Inc.** offers an entirely different approach to refrigeration evaporator design – a round tube evaporator that comes in several lengths. By moving adjustable slide rings along the length of the evaporator you can target your airflow to your needs. It was in research, development and testing for several years and results are showing improved location cooling and fairly impressive energy efficiency vs. standard evaporator units. Cool Tube can be retrofitted into an existing unit. www.cooltube.com
- **Technomic Information Services** doesn't need an introduction to foodservice pros but you should know they have a free subscription offer of three months to one of their six industry newsletters. Email Patric Noone at pnoone@technomic.com to sign up. To see the newsletters, visit www.technomic.com – go to the *Publications* tab.



Autowraptec



Rhino Environmental Solutions



Silar® Microwave Grill & Flatstone
by Advanced Composite Materials



Everpure



Ice Manager by Follett

Spray Master

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- **Advanced Composite Materials**, a world leader in silicon carbide technology, made a foodservice debut at NRA 2008 with a patent pending “revolution in microwave cooking” – the Silar® Microwave Grill & Flatstone. A shelf for use in high speed microwave/convection or impingement ovens claims to reach cooking temperatures in as little as 5 seconds and to reduce cook times by up to 90%. Demonstrations and tasting impressed me and I took others back to see the performance. Their website lists compatible microwaves: www.silarwave.com/product_gr_fs.html.
- At Ideas Well Done we’re following a lot of waste and water technology since we feel this is a major area for innovation. I found a very simple and interesting waste filtration product buried back in the technology section. It’s from **Rhino Environmental Solutions** of Canada. Their simple device captures wet waste from drains in sinks, allowing cleaner water to flow to the sewer system and containing food waste in a filtration membrane. Rhino’s system also has positive FOG (fats, oil, grease) benefits to our over-taxed sewer infrastructure. There’s a video on their website: www.rhinofiltration.com/
- **Grovac** offered a new twist on vacuum marinating with a system and additive to eliminate bacteria on food to extend shelf life, cut down on food deliveries and eliminate off-taste products with several models of marinators. www.grovac.com
- **Follett** continues their innovation of the ice segment with their introduction of the Ice Manager. The new twist on their remote ice delivery system allows a diverter valve to direct ice to different locations from one source. Pretty cool (yes pun intended). www.follettice.com/products/chewblet-horizon-icemanager.asp
- **Everpure** has picked up on a European trend for treating, chilling, carbonating and serving high quality luxury water in foodservice establishments to replace bottled water. We have predicted for a while that this trend will catch on and expect different systems to be offered in the future. There is a major environmental benefit here. You can check out www.everpure.com; the Exubera is mentioned in their residential section. However commercial models are available as both countertop and undercounter versions. I was reminded by a friend that there are similar devices available and in use: George Knoll of Natural Choice Corporation (NCC) developed and introduced such a water cooler in 1996 – www.naturalchoicewater.com/appliances.html. That unit is installed at many locations around the world.

My picks of the show

My pick of the show for best new innovation: **Somat's** introduction of their eCorrect waste reducer. Picking up on Asian technology, Somat has introduced a pulp and compost generating package that is compact, economical and highly beneficial to operations and the environment. I was so excited about this I stayed around pitching the system to passersby. www.somatcompany.com/ecorrectnews.htm

My pick for most unusual product goes to **Crustastun** which I found in a small booth in the basement level, run by a delightful husband, wife and daughter team from the UK. They introduced the "world's only humane stunning system for lobsters, crabs and crayfish." A push of a button gently kills (Monty Python comes to mind with that statement) crustaceans which the developers claim improves texture and taste through stress reduction. The product was Best Technical Innovation of 2007 by the Seafood Industry Authority and was featured as Best Innovation by *Time Magazine* in 2006. See it at www.crustastun.com.



Crustastun



eCorrect waster reducer by Somat

HOT PICK

HOT PICK

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