

Expo West Unleashes this Year's Natural Food Trends

Bigger and reportedly better than ever, Expo West 2008 was bursting at the seams this year with over 52,000 visitors (an increase of 11% over the prior year) vying for a look at the latest natural food, health, and personal care offerings from roughly 3400 exhibitors. Yes, reportedly I couldn't make it this year. But, news is spreading quickly about emerging (or continuing) trends that dominated the show. It sounds like this year we can expect to see many more options in the following categories:

Gluten-Free ~ Bread, dessert, cereal, pasta, you name it … if it was made with wheat, it can now be found without. Perhaps next year I can get dairy-free to be the dominating theme?

Certified Fair Trade ~ Certified organic is so last year, fair trade is the new buzzword for conscious shoppers.

Chia Seeds ~ The seed trend just keeps getting smaller, literally. Two years ago I was writing about flaxseeds (pretty darn small), last year hemp seeds (really fricken small), and this year chia seeds (are you sure those aren't poppyseeds?). This new wonder food has moved well beyond the chia pet! Not sure what to do with chia seeds? Just wait, some recipes are on the horizon for later this week!

Omega-3 Fats ~ This is one trend that seems to have some staying power. Omega 3's are now being incorporated into various foods, including chocolate truffles. Yes, no joke!

Cocoa ~ Speaking of chocolate, the whole chocolate as a health food idea just keeps gaining steam. We are very happy to hear this, though I am still not on board with all of the chocolate flavored cereals that are emerging.

Reusable Shopping Bags ~ Yes! Okay, this isn't exactly a food topic, but I was too excited about this one.

Pre- and Pro-biotics ~ While prebiotics are actually old school, they are a new term in the consumer industry. Both the pre and probiotics are being added to various snacks for a digestive boost.

Exotic 'Superfruits' ~ Apparently superfood is too general now, we are breaking it out into super categories. Mangosteens, goji berries, yum berries(?), and acai are tops on the flavor list for this subsection.

Whole and Sprouted Grains ~ Soon Americans will have no excuse for not consuming those recommended servings of whole grains!

Keep an eye out in the weeks ahead, as many new natural foods released at Expo West will be announced to the public and make their market debut!