

WHAT'S COOL AT NATURAL PRODUCTS EXPO WEST P. 28

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SPICES AISLE

# Spice is Nice with Savories and Sweets

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**A**lthough spices and herbs have been around for thousands of years, there's a renewed culinary interest with the growth of ethnic cuisine and the role of health.

Flavor trends are changing, too, with a move toward Indian curries, the flavor notes of Asia, the complex blends of the Middle East and the bright and vibrant tastes of the Caribbean on more mainstream palates. Organic offerings have caught up with the trend.

Say goodbye to boring food and standard baked goods. Welcome hot and spicy and bold flavors enlivened with the spices and herbs from around the world—exotic, fair-trade, single origin and organic. No longer is a vanilla just vanilla, now you can get it from Tahiti or New Guinea. It's a repeat for cinnamon, oregano, bay leaves and more.

Hot and spicy works for both savory and, surprisingly, for sweets. According to Steve Krusic, PR director for Frontier, a leader in organic spices and herbs, sales of cayenne pepper grew 27 percent in the past 12 months ending October 2007. As a recipe ingredient, cayenne adds heat to Indian, Mexican, Caribbean and other

cuisines. A pinch added to your next batch of brownies adds a pleasant kick. Krusic suspects that the potential medicinal benefits may be driving sales.

### For Health and Flavor

"We are also seeing sales growth on items such as cinnamon and turmeric that have been in the spotlight for their health and medicinal benefits," Krusic adds. Bakers can take heart knowing that their homemade goodies not only taste good but may boost health. More choices in products may mean more confusion for customers. For cinnamon you can find Vietnamese, Chinese, Ceylon or Korintje, and the flavors vary. And you may have the choice of organic or fair-trade to boot. To help customers choose, it's a good idea to have someone on your grocery staff that's knowledgeable about spices.

Flavor trends are changing, too, with a move toward everyday ethnic — Indian curries, flavor notes of Asia from China, Japan, Indonesia,

Korea, Singapore and more, the complex spice blends of the Middle East and the bright and vibrant tastes of the Caribbean. Each year spice giant McCormick teams with top chefs to come up with their top 10 flavor pairing choices. For 2007 they include wasabi and maple, Tellicherry pepper and berry, cumin and apricot and lavender and honey, just to name a few that combine sweet and savory. This helps you and your customers develop out of the box thinking.

### What's New?

Frontier just introduced vanilla extracts and beans from Uganda, New Guinea and Indonesia that will appeal to those who believe that place influences taste. The firm also offers its Simply Organic line, as well as spices and herbs in bulk. Another new product introduction is the built-in adjustable pepper grinder with 11 varieties including Sichuan, Grains of Paradise and long pepper, which are not true peppers.

They are, however, listed in the 2007 Packaged Facts Culinary Trend Mapping Report as being hot commodities on the trends list. Also on the "hot" list are Middle Eastern spices such as Zatar, sumac, Ras el Hanout, Harissa, the Asian spices: Shichimi, Japanese 7 spice, star anise and Chinese 5 spice, and the

