

Fresh Takes



Sandy Almendarez is the Managing Editor for the Natural Products Marketplace Magazine. She is new to the Natural Products Industry, but has been working on various magazines for more than five years. She graduated with a Journalism and Mass Communications degree from Arizona State University. She has always been a "label reader" and is excited to be learning so much about natural products. She stays healthy by hiking, jumping rope, weight training and eating raw vegetables every day.

Expo West Wrap-Up

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My brain has finally stopped buzzing from the excitement of Natural Products Expo West, held in Anaheim, CA, on March 11 to March 13, 2011. As always, I had a great time, met and reconnected with interesting industry members, and observed up-and-coming trends in the natural products world. This was the busiest Expo West in terms of attendees, booths and activities, at least in the last three years I've attended. Many people commented on how the industry is looking much brighter than a few years ago. While we outlasted the bad economy better than other industries, it looks like any slowdown is in the past.

The cheerfulness of this year's Expo West was sullied a bit by the news of the disastrous earthquake and following tsunami in Japan. We all watched videos of the horror, and our thoughts were with those families affected by the tragedy. It also reminded us how lucky we all were to be safe and able to experience the magnificence that is the natural product world.

And magnificent indeed. First off, my favorite new product award goes to [Xan Confections's](#) CocoXan Chocolate with Benefits, which come in four varieties fortified with healthful nutrients, including coenzyme Q 10 (CoQ10) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). What makes these so cool is that most of them are fortified with branded ingredients, for instance CocoWell contains [BioThera's](#) Wellmune WGP®, CocoBrain contains [Martek Biosciences' Life's DHA™](#), CocoHeart contains CoQ10 from [Kaneka QH](#), CocoPreggers are infused with folic acid and Life's DHA, and CocoPMS has chasteberry and bilberry ingredients. While the company is quick to say these are not to replace supplements, it's interesting to have chocolate that feature fortified nutrients with research backing.

Here are some trends I noticed at Expo West this year:

- **Gluten-Free:** Products made without gluten were almost as abundant as samples. Pasta, bread, drink mixes, cookies, dairy products, supplements and personal care products were all gluten-free this year. And, companies that weren't gluten-free mentioned they were looking into introducing gluten-free lines. I thought this trend was big last year, but I had no idea.
- **Water:** Water of every kind was available on the show floor, which I particularly liked because I'm usually so thirsty at these shows. Water was infused with electrolytes, minerals, vitamins and even caffeine. Water was raw, flavored and cause supporting. One company, [Ola Beverage Company](#), introduced its reformulated Olade Enhanced Waters to bear the USDA organic seal. One product I liked was from [Refreshing Ideas](#), which released natural spring water in a [Tetra Pak](#) to reduce water's eco-footprint.
- **Coconut:** Overlapping with the last trend, coconut water was everywhere, but it was not outdone by coconut sugar, coconut flour and coconut oil. [Earth Balance](#) released an Organic Coconut Spread, which can be used like butter and is super tasty.
- **Fair Trade:** Third-party seals are becoming more abundant, but [Fair Trade](#) was the biggest one I saw. At the Fair-Trade booth, I learned three years ago, only eight products could be certified as Fair Trade; today more than 100 ingredients can bear the symbol. Three years ago, whole finished products were certified, such as coffee; now, companies tout the individual Fair Trade ingredients that feature in products.
- **Apps:** Technology will always be important in getting brand messaging to retailers and consumers, but this year, I heard of more apps than ever. Being an unwilling neophyte, I haven't had the chance to use an app yet (Man, do I want an iPad!), but [New Hope](#) created an Expo West app that I heard was helpful in navigating the show floor. For consumers, [Frontier](#) launched a recipe app that allows shoppers to browse by ingredient, type of diet (e.g. Mediterranean) or meal type. It also has a "random" function that brings up a random recipe so shoppers can vary their meals.
- **Repackaging:** A number of companies launched new packaging at this year's Expo West to help consumers better understand products. [Numi](#), [Sambazon](#) and [Somersaults Snacks](#) are just a few.
- **Lack of Resveratrol:** Last year, I saw resveratrol in many products' ingredient lists. While it still has a presence, I didn't see as much of it this year.

As a side note, Ken Whitman and Dr. David Pascal from [Peter Gillham's Natural Vitality](#) convinced me that I need to be taking magnesium. From the way they talk, this mineral could be the next big nutrient. Move over vitamin D.

Lastly, I want to say these are the trends that I saw, which could be quite different from what you saw. For instance, on the last day of the show I spoke with a first-timer, who said she thought resveratrol was huge at the show. And one doctor who said he'd been attending for more than 10 years said water isn't as big as it used to be. What about you? Am I completely wrong about coconut? What did I miss? Please post your comments below.