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Product Development Advice From SFA Business Summit Speakers

New products that meet consumer needs, help buyers differentiate themselves, and keep your brand relevant are the lifeblood of the specialty food industry. But a lot goes into successful product development and launch—from data analysis to trend tracking to project management tools.

An esteemed group of experts will bring their unique perspectives on all that and more to the Specialty Food Association's Business Summit – Product Development Boot Camp, taking place April 8-10 at the Sheraton DFW in Dallas.

We asked presenters to share a peek of the advice that they hope to impart to specialty food maker attendees as they set about their journey to plan, make, and launch their next new product.



Q: What tips do you have for specialty food companies seeking to innovate around product development?

Michelle Jones, executive vice president and chief innovation officer, Stage-Gate International
Session: How Do I Plan It? From Idea to Launch—Using Stage-Gate Methodology

“Get your product development process right and you can make a real, positive impact on every product that is developed from it. A process like Stage-Gate levels the playing field, enabling a small company to compete against larger companies with new product innovations. New product success is not determined by deep pockets of cash investment; it's all about your development process.”

Shelley Balanko, senior vice president, The Hartman Group
Session: Who's Eating What? A Consumer Needs and Benefits Approach to Product Development

“We would advise creating products that include attributes that can address multiple benefit spaces. The more flexibly your product can live in the consumer's life the better, as it will encourage greater volume and frequency of purchase. For example, on one occasion a product may speak to pleasure, and on another it might deliver on performance needs.”

Christian Klawitter, managing partner, co-owner and strategist, Bright Design
Session: How Do I Compete? Trends in Food and Beverage Retail Branding

“Engage your branding partners sooner in the product development cycle. Too often, brands come to us with product development near the finish line. We look at the whole brand and whole brand expression. Structure, substrate, closures, print processes, and product delivery are all opportunities for brand expression and differentiation. We also believe that all true innovators look beyond what they know and invite collaboration around mindset.”

Dries Zender, principal, SPINS Brand Growth Solutions
Session: How Do I Explain It? Using Data to Create Effective Product Pitch Decks

“Start with a need and a consumer base, don't just innovate because you can or you have an idea. Ideas are

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great, but not all ideas turn into great products. We see greater success in brands that are more thoughtful about what channels they sell in and focus their efforts toward a specific consumer base.”

Suzy Badaracco, toxicologist, chef, and registered dietitian

Session: What’s Trending? Food, Flavor, and Culture

“Know the birth and lifecycle of a trend prior to deciding to enter so you can foretell how to navigate it; neither love nor hate a trend—emotions will fog the trend’s true pattern and you may be blindsided when it shifts; and spend more time researching a trend’s personality and trajectory than worrying about what your competitors are doing—after all, they may be idiots.”

The information-packed, two-day Summit is set up to provide you with solid skills you can put to work immediately. Day 1, “Let’s Innovate,” will show you how to identify and develop a successful plan to produce exciting new food products. Day 2 is all about “Let’s Launch” and will offer intensive workshops in three key areas: regulatory compliance and food safety; selling and distribution strategies; and marketing. You can choose one track for the day. [Find a full roster of presenters and more information here.](#)

Another benefit of a live event like the Summit is it lets attendees gain insight and business acumen from like-minded peers in attendance. In anticipation of that, if you have any product development-related questions or advice, please share it with our Community in the [Q&A forum](#).

Posted by [Julie Gallagher](#) on Mar 15, 2018 1:15 PM America/New_York

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