

Eats: Putting 'tasty' to work at the B2B Trade Show

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If your idea of "business" involves a variety of good food, then they certainly got down to it at the trade show in Lewiston last week.

It was last Thursday morning, the 13th of June, and the annual Business to Business Trade Show at the Androscoggin Bank Colisee was literally and loudly humming with the sound of people preparing for a unique day of networking.

But among the sell-out crowd hosting 193 booths and representing 60 different industries were about a dozen local restaurateurs, caterers, bakers and beverage suppliers who came to share their ideas, information and — best of all — edibles with prospective customers and business contacts.

If you didn't make it to the trade show for their giveaways -- sorry -- check them out locally. Here's what you missed.

Grant's Bakery

At the Grant's Bakery booth, passersby were asked to "Show us your cake face!" According to Kari Grant-Gagnon, "participants were encouraged to find creative ways to express their love — or hate . . . but really, who hates cake? — for cake, all for a chance to win lunch for four." The winner will ultimately be decided by how many "likes" their photograph gets on a social media site.

In addition to their popular cupcakes, the Grant's Bakery booth served sugar cookies, gave away several large decorated cakes — a specialty at Grant's — as door prizes, and served their signature petite pastries, more cake and filled finger rolls at the Chamber of Commerce's Business After Hours.

Grant's is family owned and operated, located at 525 Sabattus St. in Lewiston.

ZoZo's Gluten Free Goodies

The Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA), a Chamber of Commerce program, introduced recent high school graduate/business owner Zoe Oswald to the trade show. ZoZo's Gluten Free Goodies produces delicious

gluten-free brownies. Oswald's goal for this trade show was "to bring awareness about the rising need for gluten-free products, and to show that gluten-free products can be tasty."

In the YEA booth, Oswald, dressed in her cheerful baker's apron and a warm smile, offered samples of her brownies to everyone who stopped by. Find the brownies at Heidi's Brooklyn Deli in Auburn or reach Oswald at zozosglutenfree@gmail.com

Sambussa Stop

High school students and new business owners Ayman Mohamed and Mahamed Sheikh also participated in the Young Entrepreneurs Academy and offered "sambussa," a traditional Somali food. According to Mohamed, "Sambussa is . . . made with ground beef or potato – their vegetarian option – onion, green pepper and spices, then wrapped in dough and fried."

With its new red mobile cart topped by a bright red and yellow umbrella, Sambussa Stop came to the trade show loaded with both beef and vegetable sambussa to share. Judging by the fact that it left with not one sambussa to spare, this ethnic treat was well received.

This summer, look for Sambussa Stop's snappy red cart in Kennedy Park in Lewiston. The business is also available for catering larger groups. Look for Sambussa Stop on Facebook.

Sam's Italian Foods

At this year's trade show, Sam's introduced some new menu items, including a Boston sausage sub – "a more sweet than hot Italian sausage sub with red peppers and onion," according to Dan Poulin – and a cranberry almond chicken salad served on a wrap.

It also served up samples of three specialty pizzas, including Sam's loaded veggie and buffalo chicken. And while Sam's recently introduced other items to its menu, including new salads and alfredos, trade show goers (and others) will have to visit one of Sam's restaurants to sample those.

The Tavern at the Inn at Brunswick Station

Kevin Cunningham, executive chef at the inn, and cook Garrett Crowley brought "Country Pork Pate" to share. Crowley described it as "a crostini – a sliced baguette with olive oil, salt and pepper and Italian seasoning, roasted – with a slice of pate and a small dollop of ground mustard." Typically, it is served as part of the Brunswick tavern's cheese board, but at the trade show it stood elegantly alone.

The tavern's signature dish, said Cunningham, is sea scallops with lobster risotto. The tavern is open to the public, not just guests of the inn, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner, with a brunch on weekends.

The Garden Grille & Bar

A recent renovation at the Hilton Garden Inn in Auburn brought the Garden Grille & Bar to town. According to Amanda Theberge, the grille serves “American fare with appetizers, burgers and entrees, as well as pasta, seafood and chicken dishes.” Patrons are welcome to join them for evenings on the patio, drink specials and live music on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday nights.

The Garden Grille & Bar introduced its newest specialty cocktail — sans the alcohol of course — at the trade show. Theberge said the drink is usually made with lemon-infused Twenty 2 Vodka, produced at a micro distillery in Houlton, and curacao, a blue liqueur with an orange-like flavor. The drink does not yet have a name. Theberge was inviting people to visit the Garden Grille and Bar this week to taste and submit their favorite name for this new summer cocktail.

At the Business After Hours, The Garden Grille rolled out an array that included spicy buffalo wings and baked macaroni and cheese.

Beverages

Like The Garden Grille, several booths at the trade show served exclusively beverages.

* Gregg Levey of The Java Gourmet brought his “high quality office coffee system” to the trade show, offering “coffee made by a system that grinds fresh beans for each cup, steams/froths milk, and drops down the cup with a stir stick and sugar if desired.”

* Carol Blakeney of Javita Coffee Co. brought a specialized “Burn and Control weight loss coffee” to the trade show. According to Blakeney, the product includes the dual-action fat buster garcinia cambogia, which she said, “helps to block absorption of fat, suppress appetite, control cravings, balance moods for emotional eaters and manage cortisol, the stress hormone.”

* And at the Vemma booth one could sample Verve, an energy drink and “ultra-premium antioxidant supplement that nourishes the body at the cellular level,” according to its brochure.

In addition to offerings from The Garden Grille & Bar and Grant’s Bakery, food for the evening’s Business After Hours was provided by Jasmine Cafe of Auburn (serving sushi, Asian toast, pineapple fried rice and teriyaki or sweet and sour chicken), Nara’s of Auburn (chicken shish kebab, Arabic biryani and Greek salad), and 84 Court of Auburn (pizza, Greek salad with antipasto, and tzatziki sauce with pita bread).

There’s nothing like the business of good eating. Needless to say, no one left the trade show hungry.

