

What's next?

Day after day, I am blown away by the advances in technology we see in the world of food and beverage product development. It is truly a complex arena where we work, and I believe the strong survive. We must be on top of these advances to be successful. From gum technology to hydrocolloids, starches, nitrites, nitrates, dough conditioners, cooking methods, nutrition guidelines and everything in between: How do we stay on top of what's next?

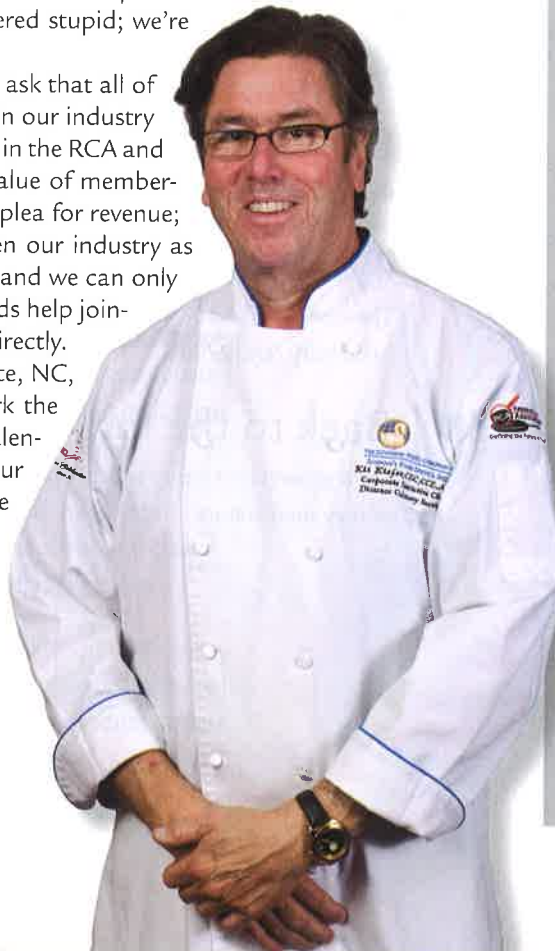
Certainly we all do our research and try to identify solutions that make sense for our business, but we also have to allocate our time and resources accordingly, and often it is difficult when we are on a tight deadline to get a product off the bench. Not to mention, we also have the paperwork required by our employers on a regular basis "due no later than" I am certain we would all rather be buried on the bench being creative with something new that makes sense for the food industry and consumers.

You've probably realized where I'm going with this. Why isn't everybody in product development across the globe actively involved in the Research Chefs Association? We have a resource that is invaluable. The best mix of chefs, Culinologists, food scientists, food technologists, nutritionists, dieticians — and on and on. The RCA has proven to be one of the most valuable resources I have with regard to what I do for a living. I get answers from members when I ask questions, and typically it is the same day. Even better: The answers are most often from experts in the field. No question is considered stupid; we're all here to help each other.

With all that said, I would ask that all of you reach out to coworkers in our industry who are not actively involved in the RCA and help them understand the value of membership. Truthfully, this is not a plea for revenue; this is an effort to strengthen our industry as there is strength in numbers and we can only grow together. If anyone needs help joining, have them contact me directly.

The conference in Charlotte, NC, will be fantastic. Please mark the dates March 6-9 on your calendar. If you've not renewed your membership, please do. We need all of you!

Christian "Kit" Kiefer
President
Research Chefs Association



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The art and science of collaboration

To build a successful career in almost any line of work, but most especially in food R&D, we have to accept, even embrace, the ideas of others. In fact, the more advanced we are as collaborators, the more advanced we are as innovators.

Anybody that knows me knows I like to shake things up. Sometimes I'll turn a thing upside down before I shake it. Looking at things differently is my default behavior especially when faced with a new challenge. Sometimes my colleagues, my team members, my co-conspirators, will push back. I love it when that happens because then I know true collaboration is about to begin. American inventor, scientist and co-founder of the Polaroid Corporation Edwin Land said, "Politeness is the poison of collaboration." I agree but the secret is to tackle the problem, not each other.

Recently I took on a new gig: president of the Research Chefs Association. It is the organization that coined the phrase "Culinology." RCA owns the trademark and it's meant to describe what happens when culinary arts and food science and technology intersect in food product development and production. I think it's a perfect term to also describe the organization that conceived it.

The RCA is an engaging blend of chefs and food scientists with an interest in learning, sharing and tackling common challenges. It is an organization committed to collaboration. Case in point: At RCA's recent Annual Conference, I learned about jellified rum, spreadable sausage and manufacturing innovations in sodium reduction. I made many new friends and caught up with previous interns who are now running their own R&D departments. My RCA colleagues are a passionate group that may have a heated debate about non-GMO product claims followed by friendlier banter about which cold blend starch offers the most freeze-thaw stability—all during a 15-minute break featuring eggless cookies.

In today's competitive environment, the pressure to develop the next great thing before our competitor does is intense. Marketing departments, R&D teams and culinary professionals are caught between what will sell, what will fail and what will go viral. Members of the Research Chefs Association see the organization as a welcome port in

the storm. If you haven't already discovered the Research Chefs Association, check us out at www.culinology.org. Or better yet, stop by our booth #2877 at the Institute of Food Technologists Annual Meeting & Food Expo, July 12-14 in Chicago. Or even better (because it involves cocktails), join us for a reception at Chicago's East Bank Club, Sunday, July 12 from 6-8 pm. I'd love to meet you and tell you more about how RCA is helping food R&D professionals become stronger, more effective collaborators.

Catherine Proper
President
Research Chefs Association



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