



Specialty Food Company Finds Continued Success in International Trade Shows

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Nonni's Food Co., Inc., a Tulsa, Okla.-based business, was built on the tradition of a beloved family biscotti recipe that traveled from Italy to America nearly a century ago. The company prides itself on its commitment to quality ingredients and believes that quality is one of the major reasons for its success. Nonni's has expanded its business to include baked goods such as New York Style Bagel Crisps, Pita Chips, and Panetini. In recent years the company turned its attention to potential overseas markets. With the help of USDA-endorsed trade shows and events, the company's success in the export arena has them traveling across the ocean again, this time sending products to countries around the world.

"Our company feels that international growth corresponds with the whole global strategic branding process," said Mr. Lee York, international division manager for Nonni's. "The company was established in the United States prior to exporting our brand, which then became intriguing to other countries. Two of our brands have a long shelf life and broader snacking appeal, making them very conducive to global expansion. We recognized that we produce a commodity that cannot be produced where we ship, which has opened a lot of doors for us overseas."

The company began to aggressively pursue overseas markets seven years ago and found that trade shows were critical to building their export business. York has found that many of the larger shows, which draw tens of thousands of attendees, are particularly beneficial for making business connections.

"At larger shows such as SIAL or Fine Food Australia, you have the opportunity to reach the critical masses, which is very important," said York. "Those events have a great return on investment over time."

The FAS Trade Services Staff (TSS) of USDA works with show organizers to secure U.S. Pavilions at key shows. Like Nonni's, many exhibitors value their experience in the U.S. Pavilion, as it offers prestige and visibility with other U.S. companies, while maintaining a company's own identity in individual booths. Additionally, it provides a strong USA identification in a prime show floor location, making these exhibitors a focal point for international importers and brokers.



Nonni's Foods participates in Fine Food Australia 2009.

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“I believe there is a benefit to exhibiting in the U.S. Pavilion,” said York. “My perception is that foreign buyers and retailers are interested in U.S.-made products. So to be in a standalone environment would handicap our attendance. I’ve seen the value in exhibiting in this space and would want to remain in the U.S. Pavilion for future shows.”

Nonni’s has also seen great benefit to participating in Buyer Missions (also called reverse missions) through state regional trade groups such as the Southern U.S. Trade Association, Food Export USA Northeast and the Food Export Association of the Midwest USA. In the past year, the company has participated in more reverse missions than ever before. Reverse trade missions bring foreign buyers into the United States to introduce them to the wide variety of high quality agricultural products available here. Missions offer the U.S. exporter a great way to make contacts quickly and cost effectively. USDA/FAS and the state regional trade groups as well as individual state departments of agriculture co-manage many of these events.

Participation in trade shows and reverse trade missions have clearly impacted Nonni’s export business in a positive way, but it also takes a good sense of business know-how to succeed overseas. York encourages companies that are interested in building their export business to be prepared for the cyclical nature of international business and to determine early on their company’s ability to grow. He emphasizes that advance work to determine the audience for your product as well as shelf life is critical to building a successful export business.