

National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show Momentum Remains Strong

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2008 Show exhibit space 'sold out' for third consecutive year, inaugural International Wine, Spirits & Beer Event is off to strong start

The National Restaurant Association today announced the National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show(R), held at Chicago's McCormick Place, May 17-20, posted strong exhibitor and attendee numbers, underscoring that the Show remains the restaurant and hospitality industry's premier international marketplace. More than 2,200 exhibitors, representing over 621,000 sq. ft. of space, showcased the most innovative new products and services on the market today, attracting 71,500 registrants from 115 countries.

"The goal of the National Restaurant Association is to provide the tools and resources to improve restaurant operations and grow sales and profits. With that restaurant growth objective clearly in focus, the NRA Show was again the premier forum for buyers to discover new products, exchange ideas and make contacts," said William C. Anton, FMP, convention chairman for the 2008 Show, and chairman and founder of Anton Airfood, Inc. "This year's expanded international focus, the record number of educational sessions, and the first-time International Wine, Spirits & Beer Event are just some of the many features that made NRA Show 2008 a great success for both exhibitors and foodservice operators."

NRA Show exhibit space grew over the sold-out 2007 Show through an ongoing reconfiguration of the exhibit floor and the addition of the International Wine, Spirits & Beer Event (IWSB).

The IWSB Event -- the industry's first professional event focused exclusively on growing restaurant and hospitality bar programs -- represented nearly 400 brands and labels from the world's best vintners, distillers and brewers. Two thousand strictly screened, bona fide beverage alcohol buyers from throughout the international foodservice industry registered to attend. IWSB was held in conjunction with the NRA Show May 19-20.

This year's education program included 72 sessions, 18 culinary demonstrations and a keynote address from Jim Skinner, Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of McDonald's Corporation. All the sessions were presented by widely recognized experts in their respective fields on priority issues, including recruitment and retention, cost control, technology integration, beverage alcohol and menu development. The culinary demonstrations were presented by top chefs and restaurateurs from around the world.

NRA Show 2008 also featured leading restaurant company executives, including Steve Ells, founder, chairman and CEO of Chipotle Mexican Grill sharing insights on moving toward sustainable operations. The Restaurant Executive Breakfast panel discussion "Surviving the Margin Crunch" featured Ted Balestreri, president & CEO, The Sardine Factory, Douglas Brooks, president & CEO, Brinker International, Inc., Lorna Donatone, President, School Services, Sodexo, Inc., and Jon Luther, chairman & CEO, Dunkin' Brands.

In addition, presidential candidate U.S. Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), held a special address to attendees and brought with him a surprise guest in Sen. Joseph Lieberman (I-Conn.). The Association also invited Sens. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) and Barack Obama (D-Ill.) to address the NRA Show, but both were unable to attend due to the ongoing primaries.

This year, the Association showcased an unprecedented 25 Kitchen Innovations(TM) (KI) Award recipients. The KI Awards recognizes the most cutting-edge restaurant kitchen equipment in the world. This year's awards address the growing needs of foodservice operators, including energy/water conservation, improving productivity and food safety. In addition, there were more products and services in the Show's Hot New Products Guide than ever, at more than 500. The hottest trends this year include "green" equipment, organic and sustainable food and beverages, and interactive technology.

The Celebrity Book Signing program attracted 19 influential trendsetters including Mario Batali, Rick Bayless, the Food Network's Ellie Krieger and John "Doc" Willoughby, executive editor, Gourmet.

For more information on these and the many other Show features -- including photos, videos and the Floored! Blog -- visit www.restaurant.org/show.

NRA Show 2009 will be held May 16-19, at McCormick Place in Chicago. The 2009 International Wine, Spirits & Beer Event will be held May 18-19.

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