

USA Rice Federation Mexico Program In Action

Active And Making A Difference

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MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

USA Rice Federation President and CEO, Betsy Ward; USA Rice Federation Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean Jody Falletta-Carman; and USA Rice Federation consultant Marvin Lehrer, traveled to Mexico City, Mexico recently to observe USA Rice Federation promotions in action. The group met up with Gaby Carbajal, Director of MexPromos; a PR firm who is directing the efforts for the USA Rice Federation. MexPromos has been responsible for all the promotional efforts in Mexico for the last eight years on behalf of USA Rice Federation. MexPromos targets consumers, the foodservice sector and the print

The TV shows reach a large audience. Regional Director for Latin America Jody Falletta-Carman said, "TV programs have an audience of four to five million each segment, we average eight segments per month, up to 10 per month. Millions are reached. They are broadcast throughout Mexico; one of them is rebroadcast in the U.S. reaching the country's Spanish-speaking population."

Later in the afternoon, USA Rice Federation's promotion partner, Belinglise Culinary Institute hosted an Oriental Festival and cooking competition featuring U.S. rice. The school's student chefs, who recently completed coursework on U.S. rice and its use in global cuisines, put their skills to use creating rice-based dishes from Thailand, Japan, China, India, and the



From left, USA Rice Regional Director for Latin America Jody Falletta-Carman, Chef Iguiniz, and USA Rice Consultant Gaby Carbajal with the students at the Mexican Festival at Colegio

radio and TV media. The group also met with members of the Mexican rice trade and the directors of the Mexican Rice Council.

Mexico has one of the lowest per capita consumption of rice in the hemisphere according to Ward. "What we do here is to target sectors that have the greatest ability to increase their consumption, since Mexico's production of rice is flat, about 20 percent of their consumption, increasing the usage of rice in Mexico benefits the U.S. producer," explained Ward. Presently the U.S. supplies about 80 percent of the rice consumed in Mexico. Any increase in rice consumption will greatly benefit the U.S. rice industry. Since 2002, Mexico has been the largest export market for U.S. rice in both volume and value terms.

Most U.S. rice exported to Mexico is long grain, with about 90 percent of total rice export volume being in paddy form. In addition to being the top market for rough rice, exports to Mexico are diversifying. The country is growing as an importer of U.S. parboiled rice (sixth ranking in 2007); medium grain rice (seventh in 2007); long grain milled rice (seventh in 2007); bran (first in 2007); and flakes (first in 2007). In each category, significant growth has been shown over the past five years.

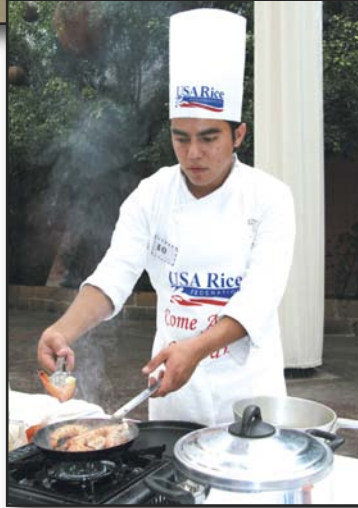
The strategy of the USA Rice Federation is to promote the consumption of rice to consumers and the large and growing foodservice sector. Currently Mexico does not conduct research in rice nor do they have extension services. According to Carbajal, the challenge in increasing consumption is overcoming the centuries-old traditional diet that consists largely of corn and beans. The Mexican variety of rice is an older variety, long or medium grain. Ward explained, in order to bring about change, the USA Rice Federation programs focus on educating the working class and higher in rice preparation, its versatility and affordability. MexPromos holds several regional chefs of the year competitions which are held in various cities including Guadalajara, Puerto Vallarta and Cancun. The national competition is held in Mexico City.

Ward's visit to Mexico City, was arranged to coincide with the conclusions of four events planned by MexPromos in and around Mexico City. At the first event, Ward crowned Mario Rojas as Mexico's 2008 'Rice Chef of the Year.' A prestigious title, chefs from across Mexico representing restaurants, hotels, culinary schools, culinary publications and chain restaurants compete yearly for this title in Mexico. Chef Rojas, owner of Centro Espanol restaurant, will represent USA Rice at high pro-

Middle East while competing for top honors.

On the third day Ward and the group met with Mexican housewives. In reaching the housewives of Mexico, the message is different, "it is stretching your budget, feeding your family, making it go far, making a simple economical meal. Nutrition at less cost is a big message to this audience," said Falletta-Carman.

Ward attended a Consumer Cooking Contest entered by 100 plus working-class women who had previously attended seminars coordinated by MexPromos. During the year MexPromo coordinated with various Mexican Social Service and family development agencies and held over 126 seminars at churches, community centers and training centers. With an average attendance of 150 people, the total reach is over 18,900 consumers. The participants in turn become teachers in their communities. Numerous



Betsy Ward congratulating Mario Rojas as Mexico's 2008 'Rice Chef of the Year.'

groups that attended these local seminars sent participants to compete in the Consumer Cook-



USA Rice Federation's promotion partner, Belinglise Culinary Institute, hosted an Oriental Festival and cooking competition featuring U.S. rice. Looking on are Jody Falletta-Carman and Betsy Ward.

ing Contest. The housewives were eager to share their stories. When asked what they have learned at the seminars they said, "I have learned that I haven't been cooking it properly. I open the bag and I wash it and fry it and kill it. It comes from our traditions in the old days. We used to get rice directly from the countryside where our grandmothers had to do that. We have learned by washing it, we are taking off the starch, we are destroying the properties. There is no need to fry it."

Another had this suggestion, "I learned when we are buying a kilo of rice we should be thinking that we are buying three kilos of food and the rice companies should put on the bag that it yields three kilos."

One group answered, "we learned that rice goes with everything, but also that we don't have to use so much. We thought you always had to use lard when you made rice but we have learned through this training that you don't. So it is much better."

One participant stated, "rice is versatile, you can combine it with many, many ingredients, it's economical and nutritious, if you buy one kilo and really cook it, it turns out to be three kilos. That is great."

"Since there so much rice served in Tex-Mex restaurants in the United States, Americans think Mexicans eat a lot of rice, but in fact they don't. Rice is a new food for the Mexican diet. Providing these seminars and this training enables them to use rice in many different ways. They are excited about it," explained Ward.

"It is actually very gratifying to see how engaged these housewives are in this competition, how they understand the messages about rice that we have tried to teach them. Hopefully they will become the ambassadors for their friends. It is a very good grass roots effort we see here today and I think you have to start with each individual. That is what we are seeing," added Ward.

Before leaving Mexico City, representatives of USA Rice Federation met with members of the Mexican rice trade and directors of the Mexican Rice Council. The group discussed the current world rice supply, and the rice crop outlook for the U.S. and Mexico and strategies for increasing rice consumption in Mexico.

USDA trade statistics report Mexico imported 829,000 metric tons of rice in 2007. Comparing 2007 to 2008 for the months of January to July indicates an increase in 2008 of 40 percent over the same period in 2007. The rice trade members representing Mexico report local rice production is not expected to grow in the near future.

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