

RFA International Tour provides members valuable insight into the prepared foods business in Ireland

In October, over 20 RFA members plus spouses traveled overseas for the RFA International Tour, where they spent five days exploring and learning from the prepared foods business in Ireland. Thanks to the excellent attendance and outstanding organization by NPD Direct, the Tour was another successful RFA event. Members visited a variety of manufacturing plants, retail stores and distribution centers, gaining insights into the trends and technologies utilized in Europe.

A full recap of this year's trip will be posted on the RFA website in the coming weeks, but in the meantime, here's what several attendees had to say:

"The RFA International Tours are always extremely informative; our visit



Above: Tony Kunis and Mark Reser of Reser's Fine Foods check out the expansive prepared food display at a retail store in Dublin.



Left: RFA members tour the potato processing room at Country Crest, a company that grows and prepacks vegetables and produces 55,000 convenience meals a week.

to Nature's Best, an Irish food processor, was particularly insightful. They allowed us to freely tour their facility as well as candidly sharing a recent negative experience with one of their major customers that was quite sobering. We were also able to visit with several major Irish retailers and see firsthand



the vast array of fresh meals and unique packaging available daily to their consumers."

Wendie DiMatteo Holsinger, CEO, ASK Foods, Inc.

"The opportunity for me to view other distribution systems as well as warehousing/manufacturing facilities was of great value. To learn of the challenges faced and the steps taken to counter a global slowdown for the various companies was enlightening. Furthermore, the chance to spend time with current and future customers proved to be a great value add to the entire trip."

Lynn Gravley, President/CEO, NT Logistics

"It was genuinely eye-opening to experience such a dramatically different prepared food cultural. The shelf space that retailers dedicated to refrigerated ready-to-heat and ready-to-cook prepared foods and the breadth of variety they each offered was absolutely mind boggling. It was also remarkable to learn that consumers scoffed at prepared products that carried a shelf life of more than four or five days... (Continued on pg. 5)



Top Left: The ladies on the trip gather around Mark Sandridge at one of the group dinners.

Top Right: Wendie DiMatteo and Jerry Crawford of ASK Foods suit up in lab coats and hats for a plant tour.

Above: Attendees toured the plant and distribution facilities of Nature's Best, Ireland's largest prepared salad manufacturer and a consolidator/distributor for other chilled food manufacturers.

Left: The group poses in front of Country Crest's state-of-the-art wind turbine which powers their plant.

