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WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Among the learning sessions held before the show was a panel of bakers who provided their insights into what shops are facing today. Entitled “Where are we and where are we going: the bakers perspectives,” the panelists included: **Dufflet Rosenberg, founder of Dufflet;** Simon Blackwell, owner of Blackbird Baking Co.; Gottfried Boehringer, president of The Stonemill Bakehouse; and Darryl Rowe, president of Weston Bakeries.

On the topic of consumer perceptions about baked goods, Rosenberg said people talk about clean label, but consumers don’t know what “natural” means.

Rowe agreed. “Consumers are more informed, but not better informed,” he said. “All of us are on a journey to find what consumers want today and tomorrow.”

For Boehringer it was about delivering a “good for you” story that consumers can understand and relate to.

When asked about discerning fads from trends, Rosenberg said it’s the public that decides what will be a fad or a trend. And while Boehringer noted we will always have cycles, Rosenberg said the media is charging up trends today, and social media makes it more



Colourful cakes and eye-catching sweet treats attracted attendees at Bakery Showcase 2016. Booths offering samples to taste were sure to draw large crowds, and artisan breads were a hit.

explosive than it ever was. She noted how cupcake shops popped up and then faded away. “Is the French macaron here to stay?” she asked, then answered, “I think it is here to stay.”

When it comes to social media, two of the panelists said they are very involved. “I think social is very important,” said Blackwell, listing Instagram, Twitter and now SnapChat as key channels. His bakery has close to 17,000 Instagram followers.

Dufflet is also active on Twitter and Instagram. “To keep your followers you have to be part of the community,” Rosenberg said. “It’s not just an advertising tool.”

Both Boehringer and Rowe indicated they were not too active on social platforms.

Playing off the social media theme, panelists were asked about how they deal with millennials as customers. “This is why social media is so important,” said Rosenberg, “and online ordering too.”

Boehringer explained the importance of transparency. “Your company’s core values must resonate with their core values,” he said, citing the importance of focusing on the triple bottom line: social, economic and the environment.

For Weston, Rowe said portability and convenience were important, while also maintaining a more natural product.

“Being less packaged is viewed as more natural, but is it safe?” he said. “Over time we have to deal with food safety.”

Finally, the panelists were asked about the next trends. For Blackwell the answer was not an item, but a back-to-basic approach. And that sentiment was echoed by Boehringer, who pointed to the move towards long fermentation for breads as opposed to industrialized loaves.

Rosenberg couldn’t identify one trend, but said she’d like to get away from bright colours and having to create perfect gems for people to take photos of for Instagram.

And according to Rowe, transparency and portability are the new trends. Transparency so customers can understand what’s going into products, and portability because people are snacking more.

The trends pointed out by the bakers were all visible on the Bakery Showcase show floor, where the eye-catching decorative items, quick snack ideas and the promotion of clean label and natural ingredients continue to hold strong.

It will be interesting to see how these trends hold up for the next Showcase in 2018. In the meantime, mark your calendar for the next Bakery Congress set to be held at the Vancouver Convention Centre, April 23 and 24, 2017. / **BJ**