Wisconsin students garner top almond prize

A University of Wisconsin-Madison’s student food product development team entered the 2005 Annual Almond Innovations Contest and won first prize. The competition, sponsored by the Almond Board of California, was open to food science students across the United States, and utilized almonds, California’s largest tree nut crop.

The ingenuity and dedicated work of the winning team was evident in their development of a product they named “Cone-coxion.” Cone-coxions are bite-sized crispy almond waffle cones layered with rich dark chocolate and drizzled with crunchy almond pieces. Cone-coxions combine consumers’ favorites – chocolate and nuts – with a miniature waffle cone that can be eaten plain or filled with ice cream. When a craving can be satisfied by a healthy snack, it is definitely a winner, and because almonds are the number one ingredient, Cone-coxions were an excellent choice for first prize.

Almonds have several unique characteristics that contributed to the overall success and taste of Cone-coxions. Almonds are prized for their crunchy texture, flavor and versatility, allowing them to be used in many different sweet and savory food applications.

Incorporation of almond skins and meal in Cone-coxions provided natural contrasting almond shades to give the consumer a spectacular first impression.

The main benefit from incorporating almonds in food products like Cone-coxion is their significant vitamin E content. One serving of almonds provides 37% of the daily value for vitamin E, which is an antioxidant in the maintenance of the body’s cell membranes.

Consumers generally have a positive attitude towards almonds and consider them as a food-of-the-times, worth more than the ordinary nut and very flexible as an ingredient to food applications. Consumers also associate the fat in almonds as a good, heart-healthy fat that will help lower bad cholesterol levels.

The grand prize for the student group included a cash award of $5,000 and a trip for a student representative to the Institute of Food Technologies (IFT) Expo held in New Orleans, Louisiana in July 2005.