



## GAZETTE

**Monday, April 3, 2017**

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### **Communicating the Science of Food**

**presented by Dr. John Coupland,  
PhD, CFS, IFT President 2016-17**

**While science and scientists continue to enjoy high levels of public respect and trust, many food scientists feel their work is viewed with suspicion. In his talk, Dr. Coupland will explore the power of science to support better decisions about food and the consequences of ignoring the evidence. He will also explore some of the reasons for the gap between scientific knowledge and public trust. Effective communication, both speaking and listening, can help build better trust between food scientists and the public and Dr. Coupland will explore examples and offer tips on how we can all learn to speak more effectively about our profession and our work.**

About Dr. John Coupland

John Coupland is a professor of food science at Penn State and serves as President of IFT. He received his degrees in food science from Leeds University in England before working as a post-doc at UMass Amherst and also in Dublin before moving to Penn State where he teaches courses in food chemistry, food physical chemistry and food ethics. His research interests are focused on the physical chemistry .....cont'd on pg. 4..

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## From The Chair:

**We are very excited to have IFT President, Dr. John Coupland to speak at the April 3rd meeting.**

**John will give us insights on how to effectively communicate with non-technical people who only hear about food issues through various media outlets—good, bad, or indifferent.**

**I work in a flavor company and friends and relatives ask me all the time about the evils of artificial flavors. People perceive that these flavors are bad just from the word “artificial.” Dr. Coupland will help us with these types of discussions, when dealing with controversial food topics.**

**We do need to engage these people in substantive discourse in showing them how science leads us to our conclusions. We might want to ask them what science they are using to arrive at their conclusions. This would make for a lively discussion, indeed!**

Frank Vollaro for the Executive Board

## Upcoming meetings:

**June 5, 2017- “The Meaning of USDA Organic—presented by Alan Johnson, Independent Consultant**

**IFT National Meeting  
June 25-28, Las Vegas, NV.  
“Flavor Interactions in Foods,”  
Pre IFT meeting short course  
June 24-25**

**go to [www.ift.org](http://www.ift.org)  
for information on all IFT short courses, before the meeting**

**watch the LIIFT Gazette for particulars**

**check out our website: [www.longislandift.org](http://www.longislandift.org)**

## MEETING PLACE & DIRECTIONS

**Date: Monday, April 3, 2017**

**Place: The Inn at New Hyde Park  
214 Jericho Tpk.  
New Hyde Park, N.Y. 11040**

**Directions: go to [www.innatnhp.com](http://www.innatnhp.com)**

**Times: 6:00PM-7:00PM, cash bar, networking  
7:00PM- 8:00PM, dinner  
8:00PM- speaker**

**Price: \$40.00 per person with reservation  
\$50.00 per person at the door**

**Reservations: Carol Zamojcin @ 516-352-5772,  
anytime before Fri. March 31st.**

## Communicating the Science of Food

by Dr. John Coupland, IFT President 2016-2017  
*Food Technology*, September 2016

Those of you able to join me at the record-breaking IFT16 meeting in Chicago may have noticed a common theme in the plenary sessions—the power of science and the importance of effective communication. Jacques Rousseau opened the meeting with thoughts on pseudoscience, belief, and the power of critical thinking, as well as on the consequences of getting it wrong. Ben Goldacre described how the often unintentional misuse of data and statistics in the medical field can lead to unjustified conclusions and cost lives. Bev Postma talked about “slaying dragons”—effective use of communication skills to support consensus-based science over entrepreneurs who would otherwise capitalize on fear.

All these speakers were experts, convinced of the astonishing power of science to support prudent decision-making about how we should grow and prepare the food we eat. However, food science doesn't exist in isolation from real people making, selling, buying, and eating real food. While these consumers might be carefully evaluating the latest science in their food decisions, they likely aren't. That isn't to say any individual's choices are necessarily bad, they may just be weighing different types of information of just valuing different things. It was therefore very appropriate that the other main-stage presentation was given over to the people who buy and eat the food we make—seven real people from the Chicago area who talked about what they looked for in food and in particular what “clean,” “natural,” and “healthy” meant to them. While food and nutrition scientists may be very uncomfortable with all of these terms, they were important labels the consumers used to judge whether food would be appropriate for them and therefore important terms to the companies selling ingredients at the food expo.

We can do more as food scientists to support

a greater public understanding of how and why food is made in order to guide consumers in better decision making. In fact, some of the forward-thinking members of our community have already begun to take on this task. Both the IFTSA blog “Science Meets Food” and “Don't Eat the Pseudoscience,” a group of young professionals and students trained as food communicators by IFT, offer effective examples of communicating the importance of the science of food to the public.

IFT will continue to do more to support and train food scientists who are motivated to talk about their work. For example immediately before IFT16, Trevor Butterworth (Sense About Science USA) talked about science communication at a summit for section and division leaders, and his team later participated in training for the IFT Food Science Communicators who provide rapid responses to media inquiries.

One of Butterworth's essential points for science communicators was to be absolutely clear around issues of conflict of interest. It's tempting to imagine conflict of interest as important only in its most egregious forms—for example, a scientist falsifying data to benefit a research sponsor. While it's impossible to say this sort of thing never happens, it's certainly so far from most of our experiences that we might feel that because we wouldn't engage in such a practice, then we don't suffer from any conflicts of interest.

However, more subtle forms of conflicts of interest (or even perceived conflicts of interest) can cloud our judgments and the public's interpretation of our work. Most obviously, many food scientists depend directly or indirectly on food companies for their employment. While internal decisions around formulation, manufacturing, and safety of foods are supported by solid scientific principles, a product can be marketed with ambiguous or difficult-to-define terms in order to maintain competitiveness in a field of products making the same brand promise. This isn't unique to food; it's

how marketing works. As professionals in the science of food, we'll always walk the fine line of balancing a strict interpretation of science and its terms with the ways in which a food products may be marketed. Meanwhile, the claims made by critics of our industry are much easier for us to call out.

Conflicts of interest aren't necessarily bad in themselves. It's how we deal with these conflicts that make us trustworthy champions for food science while protecting our own reputations and those of our employers. By publicly acknowledging our own biases and limitations, we can be more effective communicators of the critical importance of food science in people's lives. We might never agree what "clean" or "natural" means on a label, but we can be clear about the science and technology that supports a safe, nutritious food supply.

I look forward to a continuing dialogue on issues such as these in my tenure as your IFT president.

About John Coupland, continued from pg. 1

.....of foods, especially emulsions and he recently published the textbook, "An Introduction of the Physical Chemistry of Foods." Dr. Coupland uses his blog and other social media to engage the public and profession in better debates around food controversies.

A very interesting Editorial from Dave Fusaro, Editor in Chief of *Food Processing*, Nov. 2016

## If Colin Kaepernick Really Wanted to Help....

...he should follow the lead of Franco and Lyndell

If Colin Kaepernick really wants to make a difference, really wants to make America's streets and lives better for black Americans, then he should emulate two football predecessors (and food entrepreneurs): Franco Harris and Lydell Mitchell.

Kaepernick is San Francisco 49'ers quarterback who had decided not to stand during the Star Spangled Banner at the start of each game. Instead, he kneels as a quiet protest of police brutality and social injustice.

Flash back to the 1970's and you have two other, far more gifted football players, Franco Harry and Lydell Mitchell were teammates at Penn State University, both running backs. In the 1972 draft, Harris went to the Pittsburgh Steelers and Mitchell to the Baltimore Colts. Both eventually made it to the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

They remained friends, and when it was time to retire from the game, they put their heads and small (very small) fortunes together and bought failing food companies. I don't think the deals were entirely philanthropic. In that day and age, even future Hall of Famers needed income after their football careers ended. I suspect that Harris and Mitchell together made less during their entire careers than Kaepernick makes sitting the bench for one game. So they returned to the cities they loved and invested in troubled, inner-city food companies that employed mostly minorities.

Parks Sausage Co. was a legend in Baltimore, started in 1951 by a black entrepreneur who overcame many barriers to make his company a success. At one point, its single plant employed more than 200, almost all inner-city minorities. But in the 1990's, financial troubles set in and the firm slipped into bankruptcy.

Harris founded a bakery in Pittsburgh with a

Harris found a bakery in Pittsburgh with a less storied past and better finances but similarly in need of a cash infusion. Harris and Mitchell together bought the bakery, renaming it Super Bakery. Then they bought Parks Sausage out of bankruptcy.

The story of Parks, unfortunately, does not have the happiest ending. Harris and Mitchell kept it running but never got it back on solid ground. They sold the plant in the late 1990's to Dietz & Watson.

Up in Pittsburgh, Super Bakers continues to pump out (among other products) the Super Donut, "fortified with minerals, vitamins and protein." The "healthful" donut is welcome in many schools and other subsidized foodservice programs.

I'm a big believer in freedom of speech and dialog on any issue, but I'm an even bigger fan of action. Kaepernick needs to do more than take a knee: he needs to move the ball forward..

Editors note:

At the sending of this gazette (3/13/17), Colin Kaepernick said that he would be standing for the National Anthem, in the upcoming season. He felt that he made his point concerning "police brutality and social injustice." All well and good.

He is now a free agent, and let's see if any team picks him up. My sad sack N.Y. Jets are need for an experienced starting quarterback. I wonder if they would sign him, considering the baggage he brings along with him., or for any team, for that matter?

If he played for my N.Y. Jets, and did not stand for the anthem, I would change the channel, when he was running the offense.

Comments?

## **New York IFT– Supplier's Day**

**Will be held on Wed. April 5, 2017, at the Garden State Exhi-bi Center in Somerset, N.J.**

**Registration for exhibitor or attendee can be found at:  
[www.nyiftsuppliersday.com](http://www.nyiftsuppliersday.com)**