



## Chicago Section IFT the First Section



### Know Your Emeritus Member: John Diehl

I actually started on the road of food technology as a young kid. My dad was a 1942 Food Technology graduate of Cal Berkeley so I spent a lot of time in the 1950's in his lab and started my first job in a QC position at Tri-Valley Growers when I was only 15 years old. I continued working summers at Tri-Valley while I worked on a BS in Nutritional Science at Cal-Berkeley then headed up north to Oregon State to complete an MS in Food Science (thesis topic dealt with the phenolic fraction of walnuts).

The job market was somewhat weak when I came out of Oregon State but given that I had 8 summers of actual experience I was lucky and received three job offers. I chose an R&D position at Libby's (just purchased by Nestlé) and worked primarily on the development of and production scale-up of the Libbyland Dinners for Kids. I also learned right away that R&D was not what I wanted to do long-term but I was such a nerd I did not know how to affect a change.

Nestlé took care of that for me about a year later when they had a large layoff and out the door I went. My goal was to get into a marketing /sales position and – voila – the following week the emerging Food Ingredients Division of Nestlé (HVP's) talked with me and said they wanted me as a test case of putting a technical person out in the field. I was still a nerd without social skills but I thrived in the job and I've been involved primarily with Technical Sales ever since (plus my social skills have improved at least a little).

Mostly I stayed within the scope of flavor sales with the savory area being my forte. I bounced around between 4 flavor houses between 1975 and 1985 until I happened to see a want-ad for a Technical Sales rep in a Sunday addition of the Chicago Tribune. It was placed by Gist-brocades (now DSM) and they were looking for a person to expand their sales in North America. I got the job, put together a business plan that worked and effectively made them a player for yeast extracts in all of North America.

Next I went to Calgene as they were bringing their genetic engineering technology for lipids to the U.S. Market. The job was challenging and frustrating because of the need to protect patent rights but I learned where genetic engineering would take us later in this century (as opposed to where it is today). When Calgene was sold to Monsanto, I left to pursue other entrepreneurial/market development areas.

Last, but not least, was enzymes where Amano USA hired me with hopes I could build their presence in the American (North & South America) food market. I liked the job, loved working with the people but for the management in Japan I was a cultural nightmare. Ultimately my nerd instincts had caught up with me again and off I went - too old to really pursue a new position - into consulting. Slowly I've ramped down my consulting activity but I do enjoy an occasional project, an opportunity to write a magazine article or an invitation to visit the Food Technology department at a university and give a talk.



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I've seen Food Technology go from basically a discipline focused on safety and process efficiency, to a discipline focused on shelf stability, convenience & taste to a discipline currently focused on merging the art of food (Research Chefs) with the science of food (Food Scientists) to give us the emerging arena of Culinology.