

FoodShows. What's the big deal?—how one distributor made it count.

by The Logistics Lady on January 28, 2011



This week I attended a Food Show at the Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center...and what a show it was!

The show, Cheney Brothers Orlando Food Show, was held at the Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center—a massive establishment, with an amusement park feel, which is why I was astounded when I found myself being directed into an overflow parking lot because all of the self-park lots were full! I quickly asked myself, “What does that mean—how many people does it take to fill these lots?” It turns out it’s somewhere between 3500-4000 attendees.

Registration was easy—within minutes I was in the door and ready to see what this was all about. The show was packed—at times making it difficult to pass through the aisles. The Beef, Produce, and Beverage booths had the heaviest traffic. And flair—this show was packed with it! A 5-pc Ladies Mariachi Band, a country singer, and chair massages; which were a plus after walking around all day. People were enjoying all of it. There was no shortage of boob magnets, yes boob magnets, no caricature artists here. These ladies were serving up everything from shrimp to shoe shines. There was more food than one person can imagine—samples in every booth and libations flowing.

After I walked through, I positioned myself at the tables behind the Iron Chef competition—a good place to strike up a conversation. I met a Daytona Beach restaurant owner who has worked with Cheney for 30yrs because he got fed up with other distributors constantly substituting their brand products on his orders. He praised Cheney Brothers for their service and the personal relationship with his sales rep. “CB does whatever it takes to help me out”—a quote I heard more than once during the day. He was here to plan the menu for his second restaurant, had made purchases already, and planned to make more. Ka-ching, business was being had!

The 300 or so sales reps guided customers from booth-to-booth, educating and selling. Their Accounting and Ordering Departments were present to facilitate sales transactions. The cash register rang all day.

Later in the day I was pleased to meet some Cheney Brothers “Ops People”—my kind of folks. We talked about their fleet and systems—CB is aggressive and ahead of the curve in technology—competition is fierce and these key differentiators give them superiority in service to their customers. These are the guys that ‘make it happen’ so most of their teams were back at the ranch making sure business continued as usual.

Before calling it a day, I met Rich Baker, owner of Anthony’s Italian Restaurant, in Trinity, FL. An independent restaurant with strong ties in the community, Anthony’s has a loyal customer base from the local school district,

little league, and more. Rich loves working with Cheney Brothers. There's growth in Trinity-lots of chain restaurants opening, so having his sales rep, Brian, visit two times per week helps. They work together to understand inventory and sales-to create weekly specials and to add new menu items. There've been times where that personal touch has really saved the day—when Brian, going above and beyond, has jumped in his car and barreled down the highway to deliver a product that Rich absolutely needed. You don't get that type of service everywhere.

After sampling food, talking to people, watching business take place and seeing all this in action I better understand why these shows are so important. I must say the folks at Cheney Brothers really know what they're doing. I have to tip my hat to Byron Russell, CEO and Chairman. Lookin' good Byron—thanks and great show!