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Republic Polytechnic Places Singapore on the Functional Food Map with Two New Collaborations with Food Industry Players

Republic Polytechnic (RP), the Singapore tertiary institution that approaches learning with a difference, unveiled two new collaborations with food industry players yesterday to help put Singapore on the functional food map.

At the Complementary and Alternative Medicine Technology Day held at Republic Polytechnic yesterday, the institution formalised its collaboration with Pere Ocean and Wealthy Seafood Product & Enterprise (WSPE) at a MOU signing ceremony. Both companies hope to gain larger market shares in their respective industry sectors by offering consumers more choices and by entering niche segments.

RP’s collaboration with Pere Ocean are developing four different formulations incorporating nutraceuticals from vegetable and fruit-derived extracts, which are named - Passionate, Energetic, Refreshing and Romantic, to match the human moods. The vegetable and fruit-derived extracts in a clear water base are new flavours to tempt jaded Singapore palates and have the added benefit of nutraceuticals, which are food constituents that have physiologically beneficial effects on humans. The project is a new venture for Pere Ocean, which manufactures and supplies bottled distilled water and mineral water. These bottled drinks also act as replacement options for distilled and mineral water and are targeted for sale in supermarkets, fast food outlets, petrol stations and 7-eleven stores by the 4th quarter of 2009.

Meanwhile, the collaboration with WSPE will focus on developing cooked functional seafood products, namely scallop and sea cucumber. This initiative is a new business strategy for WSPE, which sells frozen raw seafood at supermarkets. The functional scallops and sea cucumber are the first cooked seafood which WSPE will bring to market - presented in an innovative way and served with a fruit-based sauce. The use of cold fruit-based sauces on hot seafood gives a healthier, tastier and better mouth-feel, and offers a completely different perspective that changes established norms of enjoying scallops and sea cucumber.

These collaborations are expected to benefit Singaporean consumers who are seeking more health-conscious food products. The functional foods are high in nutraceuticals such as anti-oxidants and vitamins, and they also offer more value for money in terms of better nutritional delivery to consumers.

Prof. Elizabeth M. Williamson, Chair of the British Pharmacopoeia expert advisory group on herbal medicines who was present said, “RP continuous efforts in research and engagement with the industry point the way to the development of functional food. While it is a commercially viable enterprise, these foods also serve to fulfill the nutritional needs of Singaporeans and the region”. Professor Elizabeth Williamson, completed her PhD in Pharmacognosy at the School of Pharmacy, University of London in 1977, and qualified as a pharmacist in 1978. She is a member of several UK Department of Health regulatory committees, including the British Pharmacopoeia Commission, and is Chair of the British Pharmacopoeia expert advisory group on Herbal and Complementary Medicines and vice-chair of the EAG for Medicinal Chemicals. Prof. Williamson, recently appointed a member of the Singapore International Expert Panel for Herbal Medicines, has published extensively in the area of herbal and natural products and spoken at many international conferences including the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Sciences, At RP, she spoke extensively on ‘Novel Food’, which is food that have been modified and no longer resemble their natural forms. Such a process requires additional labelling information to ensure consumers are able to make informed choices before purchase.

RP is the first polytechnic that started projects on incorporating nutraceuticals in food products to formulate functional foods since 2006. Leveraging on the staff expertise, its School of Applied Science (SAS) has been pursuing research on ways to incorporate herbs in conventional food to enhance health benefits and creating new flavours at the same time. Some highlights include the development of healthier cranberry brownies, a collaboration effort with Foodedge Gourmet; and “Omango”, a mango ice cream enhanced with Omega-3 fatty acids developed in collaboration with Papito Gelato. The latter has been awarded the “Healthier Choice Symbol” by the Health Promotion Board. The SAS has also developed a herb-infused abalone gravy with Goh Joo Hin, which was served with New Moon pacific clams and baby corn at the media event today.

Mr Yeo Li Pheow, Principal and CEO, Republic Polytechnic, said: “RP will continue with its food innovation to create functional foods. As RP has a strong pharmaceutical science team with capabilities in pharmaceutical technology and analytical instrumentation, we aim to not only create new functional foods and leverage on our pharmaceutical expertise to apply pharmaceutical technology to food technology, but also to develop and focus on upstream research and development in functional foods and study the application of nutrigenomics in this area.”
The institution’s functional food projects have increased from four in 2006, to eight in 2007, to 12 projects currently, a jump of 200 per cent in functional food related projects from third-quarter 2006 to third-quarter 2008.

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About Republic Polytechnic
The first educational institution in Singapore to adopt the Problem-Based Learning approach for all its diploma programmes, Republic Polytechnic has six schools and one centre offering thirty diploma courses in Information & Communications Technology, Engineering, Applied Science, Technology for the Arts, Sports, Health & Leisure, Events and Hospitality, Innovation and Enterprise, and Culture and Communication. Republic Polytechnic is committed to nurturing innovation and entrepreneurial learning in an environment that develops problem-solving process skills and a life-long learning attitude. Its holistic, broad-based curriculum, covering culture, enterprise development and cognitive processes, prepares students for an active and meaningful role in society. Republic Polytechnic strives for excellence by achieving various national and international accreditations, including People Developer Standards, ISO9001, ISO14001, OHSAS 18001, Singapore Quality Class, Singapore Innovation Class, and the Singapore Health Awards (Gold). For more information, visit http://www.rp.sg.