

ITCA Nice Review

After three decades the association came to Nice with its brand-new format based around the trade show and an emphasis on all-day networking. **Patrick Murray and Jo Austin report**



It's said that 30 is a dangerous age, but evidently not for ITCA. Virtually all exhibitors and visitors we spoke to were delighted with the business opportunities the new-look event presented, whether on-stand or in the open-to-all lunch and relaxation areas. Longer opening hours and the two early-evening drinks parties just added to the feel-good factor. Throw in the specialist workshops for good measure and it's no wonder that ITCA president Stephen White was delighted with the success of the event.

As our show review confirms, ITCA is the one annual event that uniquely attracts a special band

of people. Their sole interest is in providing great onboard products for the passengers – from foie gras to pizza, peanuts to caviar, whole meals to single components, and of course water, wine, spirits, beer, tea and coffee – all under one roof. Then there are the host of equipment suppliers, those who pack and put onboard everything from blankets to headphones, cutlery and china and glasses, providers of the latest IT systems, galley specialists and, of course, the caterers.

The Buzz stand at ITCA was its usual dazzling self, from the smiles to the array of kids' products, luxury amenity kits and more. Buzz's Leonard Hamersfeld told us: "What's interesting about ITCA is that airlines are all in different countries and suppliers are all in different countries so for me the event's importance is paramount, and I'm in shock when companies don't come here. For me to come here, I spend a huge amount of dollars and I'm saving money. I see all my airlines in one spot. For me this show has been fabulous. It's a very selected, targeted trade fair. There

is a very large Middle East contingent, which I am delighted to see. We are very strong from a design perspective, and the airline industry has maybe been a bit sleepy design-wise, a bit commoditised, and I guess what we do is add value in this area. And one of the hottest things on the stand is the electronic bag tag, leading edge technology for Qantas premium passenger. If there is any industry in the world that needs a trade fair, then this is it."

At W.K. Thomas, the company celebrated its 30 consecutive years with the association, and its Mercurys success, with a big birthday cake sliced for them by ITCA president Stephen White. Packaging innovations were to the fore, with its Smartbag and Boxbag concepts, alongside the usual wide range of rotables, comfort and amenity items, plus board and plastic packaging.

On the Cuisine Solutions stand chef Jay

From top left: WK Thomas with Stephen White, Gut Springenheide; and Monty's Bakehouse and Purbeck Ice Cream



Above clockwise: EnRoute, FTS, Buzz, Paul Sapin and Dr. Oetker

Hemmer had news of big growth in the sous-vide specialist's activities: the company is opening another meals and components plant shortly near Washington DC to go with its existing US facility and the two plants in France, plus its Chilean operations. "Airlines are once again starting to compete with the food they put on board, and as a result we are seeing a massive surge in demand."

Two caterers putting on a united front at the show this year were Five Star's Peter Soltiz and Klaus Englisch of Munich Air Caterer. Peter now has some 22 airline customers and substantial non-aviation business that he has built rapidly since opening at Vienna airport only a couple of years ago, with all international cuisine styles as well as halal. Klaus Englisch was just getting ready to send the invitations for opening of his new 9000 sq m unit, producing 11000 meals a day (see p32) – slightly delayed by this winter's terrible weather, but coming very soon. It will support

catering activities at all airports in southern Germany as well as retail and terminal outlets, and it will be halal-certified.

Sharing a stand with Portfolio Partners for the first time, En Route International added the new yum.me range of long shelf-life meals to the bread, snacks, cakes and patisseries that have made the company's name. Hot and cold essential onboard goodies from Monty's Bakehouse and Purbeck Ice Cream were on display: Purbeck sales director Patrick Ward and Monty's Harry Crane had all the ice cream, hot pizza rolls, wraps and desserts you could wish for.

Long-time ITCA supporter Fabrice Paturle was there in his new guise as head of FTC Fabrice Travel Selections: from Valette foie gras to chocolate teaspoons (ask Fabrice, not us....). Another long-time supporter, Kreeks' Pierre Chaillou, was showing a new Himalaya mix of goji berries, cashew nuts and pistachios, and peanuts with either a Moroccan or Provencal twist. Also reporting a best-ever ITCA was chef

Pierluigi Cassandrini on the AR Alimentare stand: new products included handmade pizza products and authentic Italian snacks, sandwiches and puff pastry products. More pizza was on-hand from first-time exhibitor Dr Oetker with the Chicago Town brand, already a success on several airlines. And if there were long-service awards to ITCA exhibitors, they would certainly go to Paul Sapin, Gut Springenheide and Achenbach, also pictured here.

