

SOAP, PERFUMERY & COSMETICS JANUARY 2000 COLUMN

Anthony C. Dweck

Best event of the old millennium

My first column of the new millennium and I had to tear up my original piece, because an event of such inspiration and enjoyment gave me something much better to write about. Formulate '99 was the best thing the SCS have ever done and the redcoat team (not from Butlins), the organising committee and all of the suppliers who took part are to be heartily congratulated.

This was not like the normal autumn conference, which attracts all the 'old faithfuls' and is an excuse for us geriatric sages to reminisce about the glorious days of old. This event had young vibrant people at the cutting edge of technology bustling in and out of the conference programme and attacking the stands hungry for knowledge.

Tired and thirsty I was venturing past one stand when two American gentlemen pounced out on me like tarantulas catching a good lunch. In no time at all I was ensnared and sat at a table as they, like demented alchemists, mixed cartons of Ribena with packets of kava kava (*Piper methysticum*) in an old plastic bottle. There is a moral to this story, which is to read your own data before committing foreign substances to the alimentary canal. I swallowed the draft, eager to quench my thirst. As my tongue slowly lost all sensation and took up residence as an alien in my mouth, the cheerful American cousins told me of the anaesthetic and calming effects of this root. I looked up its other properties on my computer, and began to feel like a wild animal hit by a tranquilliser dart. As my brain slowly shut down, I read that this root has a hypnotic quality not dissimilar to LSD, and is also used as an aphrodisiac. It was round about this time that I developed an acute desire to visit the bathroom as the powerful diuretic properties of this plant took effect. My last meaningful thought was whether a newly acquired chronic bladder problem, raging libido, numb tongue, and brain that had temporarily gone off-line was likely to be a problem in covering this event - probably not.

Me and my new friend (a little *Aloe barbadensis* plant) moved on to have a Smartie and glass of water at another booth, where I was delighted to hear that *Sclerocarya birrea* subsp. *caffra* or Marula oil was likely to be available this year. It has taken ten years for this material to emerge as a new oil, and I am pleased to see that from my early discussions with an African agency, that a liqueur called Amarula has been produced.

On another stand sipping champagne (it really is a tough life), I was delighted to see a conditioner made from quaternised potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) starch. Imagine this in a vinegar conditioning rinse as "Frizzy Frites", blended with a *Capsicum* species as "Hot Potato", or with

Henna (*Lawsonia inermis*) or Walnut (*Juglans regia*) as "Hash Browns" - the marketing potential is bursting with fun.

From across the hall came the waft of real Colombian coffee and determined to throw off the euphoric, but sedative effects of kava kava, I decided that the kindly offer of an injection of caffeine into the system would be helpful. Here I discovered tomato, sundew (*Drosera* spp) and a whole range of superb standardised extracts that really demonstrated the scientific way in which plant materials should be specified for care of skin damage

The information and the huge mass of associated data sheets had been organised into a single computerised bundle and this was a trend that I noticed on a few of the other stands. Two stands had huge flat screens running from laptops and I managed to find three suppliers who were handing out CD ROMS as opposed to large volumes of heavy brochures.

Natural emulsifiers are few and far between, so it was a great treat to find rapeseed sorbitol made from sorbitol and rape seed (*Brassica napus*). There are plans to produce a coconut oil sorbitol early this year. Maybe it is not 100% natural, but at least the INCI name is seductive, and the material moves us closer to the green consumer.

Another interesting material I saw was produced from blood oranges (*Citrus sinensis moro*), which was packed with flavones (hesperidin and naringenin), hydroxycinnamic acids and anthocyanins. The main selling points were listed as its antioxidant and skin whitening effect, but with the high concentrations of other actives present, this material must have antibacterial and UV absorbance effect as well.

In another corner of the exhibition, I found a source of β -sitosterol, which will be available this year and is a potent anti-inflammatory. This is really exciting, because it is another plant active to add to the growing repertoire of naturally derived molecules. Ursolic acid derived from apple seeds is novel and the potential for new and exotic fruit derivatives with real skin benefit as opposed to the same old story of AHAs is this year's new opportunity.

I also discovered an abundant source of exciting new rainforest plants from Brazil, an exciting offering of marine derived complexes and derivatives, as well as some potent grape derivatives which will further add to the efficacy of our raw material portfolio.

It was not my intention to "write up" this event, I merely want to share some of my experiences. As with all events organised by the SCS, it is a fabulous opportunity to meet old friends and to enjoy the company of new ones.

To friends and colleagues in the industry, to the suppliers and manufacturers, and of course to SPC, I would like to wish you all a very Happy and Prosperous Millennium.

