

EDITOR'S CORNER

Professional Awards and Recognitions

Spring, what a lovely time of the year. This is the time life is renewed after a long winter. Flowers in the garden, leaves on the trees, birds and bees frolicking (forget about the screaming cats in the back yard) and romance fills the air. This is also the time for graduations, celebrations, awards, and yearly recognitions of achievements in many organizations. This is a time to rejoice at successes and honor those who made major contributions to the well-being of the profession and society.

Through the years I have observed three categories of award winners and would like to make a few comments on each.

Super Winners

There are those people who are so good and did so much that they always seem to win awards after awards. One can only sit back and admire their wonderful achievements. These are the super stars and they certainly deserve their awards.

Grateful Winners

For most of us mortals, awards and recognitions come to us from time to time and we appreciate the honor and feel grateful for the recognitions.

Budding Winners

This is a group of younger professionals who would very much like to win some awards and advance in their career. They are anxious to be recognized and work hard to have those recognitions.

My commentaries are for the second two groups; people in the first group need no advice!

I believe awards and recognition are important for the entire profession, since they give us something to look forward to and a chance to honor some special people in the group. At the same time I believe one should let these things happen "naturally". "Going after" some awards too vigorously may end up in unnecessary disappointment.

There are some skills and strategies that may help put you into a position for winning an award.

1. Be the best you can be in your profession and cut out a niche for yourself. Do something unique.

2. Be as active as possible in your chosen professional organization(s). I have found that a person can only be really active in, at most, three organizations at a time. Concentrating on one or two is better.
3. Be an officer and be active and contribute your time and talent to promote your organization.
4. Be supportive of other officers in the organization and gain their respect and confidence. They cast the votes.
5. Be alert for the requirements of the awards or recognitions you might be interested in and their deadlines (important!).
6. Be sure to have a truly EXCELLENT nominator. This is crucial. Your nominator can make or break your chance of an award. Some people are just fantastic letter writers; others are not.
7. Be sure your vitae and professional documents are updated at all times. You never know when opportunity will knock at your door.
8. Be modest in your assessment of yourself. Let your records speak for you.
9. Be generous when you have a chance to nominate or support someone for an award. They will not forget your kindness and will reciprocate in the long run.
10. Be gracious in winning and grateful in case you did not win because you are already a winner when someone cares enough to nominate you.

Remember, if you do not nominate someone or if someone does not nominate you *no one will win that award!* Far too often people are too busy to nominate others and as a result some excellent awards have very few candidates. A competition is no fun without great candidates.

Good luck in your next award competition and may the best person win.

DANIEL Y.C. FUNG

Fellow of Institute of Food Technologists, class of 1995
Fellow of American Academy of Microbiology, class of 1985
Grateful winner of a few awards in between