

## Expo Spurs Food Sales

AS IT prepares for its seventh annual restaurant trade show at the Cocoanut Grove April 29, Santa Cruz' Ledyard Company can credit institutional sales and a recent expansion into the frozen food sector for projected 1987 sales of \$20 million.

That would be a record year for the Live Oak firm, founded in 1929 by H.H. Ledyard and sold in 1978 to the Aldo Fontana family, former owners of San Francisco's Parisian Bakery. The Ledyard Co. is the central coast's largest restaurant supplier, with 1,300 clients from Big Sur to Half Moon Bay and from Salinas to Redwood City.

Ledyard's 6,000-product inventory ranges from toothpicks to walk-in freezers and includes seafood and fresh eggs; frozen meats, fruits, breads and vegetables; canned and packaged groceries; dairy and bakery products; shortenings and oils; light and heavy kitchen equipment; lighting and table-top supplies; paper products, chemicals and disposables.

Products from these and other groups are exhibited at Ledyard's annual expo, started by the Fontanas to boost sales and attract new clients. When they bought the firm in 1978, revenues were only \$2.4 million, sales manager Bobby Giorgetti said, but subsequent expansion into institutional markets (schools, hospitals and industry cafeterias) and frozen food products has produced 100 percent annual growth since then.

The expo itself contributes a significant share, Giorgetti said, as the event usually costs about \$15,000 to stage but generates up to \$220,000 in sales. Products ordered at the show and delivered before May 31 carry significant price reductions, he said.

While the "Big Three" national restaurant supply businesses (Allied SysCo, Continental and S.E. Rykoff) are based close by in San Jose, Giorgetti said Ledyard dominates the Central Coast market "because we're just a local company and we're service-oriented." Clients range from "mom and pop" eateries to the Crow's Nest, Ledyard's biggest account.

The company operates an 11-truck delivery fleet out of its 17th Avenue headquarters, but the products on the trucks change with the times. The latest gustatory trend is "grazing," Giorgetti said, where patrons prefer to "nitpick" through several appetizers rather than sit down to a full meal. Other relatively recent developments are Safeway-style "retail store delis" and a "general trend toward more fish and poultry," he said. •