

The **Gold** Standard

Welcome to The **Gold** Standard, a quarterly feature on leading, cutting-edge raw materials suppliers. These are companies setting new standards, breaking new ground, solving industry issues, conducting business with integrity, and expanding markets through innovative products and applications.



The *Functional Foods & Nutraceuticals* editorial advisory board led the way in developing this list of top-flight companies worthy of mention. We hope our readers will benefit from their collective expertise.



SUPERFRUITS. In this quarter's Gold Standard, we focus on superfruit ingredients from four companies — companies that have made conspicuous efforts to provide credible science about their products, educate consumers or demonstrate marketing prowess.

By most measures, superfruits are one of the biggest success stories of the industry, beginning to nip at the heels of dairy products as the forerunners of innovation and sales growth. Growing consumer demand for healthy and interesting foods is pushing fruits, with their intrinsic health aspects, to the top of the functional foods market.

For the superfruits like acai, bilberries, blueberries, cranberries, mangosteen and pomegranates, the future looks particularly bright. The number of products using these ingredients is growing exponentially each year. Superfruits or their extracts are being found in a dizzying array of products. Even supplements manufacturers are beginning to utilise antioxidant-rich superfruit extracts in formulations.

Their success appears to be attributable to several factors. One is the science. Companies have seen what published research has done for the godfather of functional fruits, the cranberry, and have understood the desire in the marketplace for foods that play a role in maintaining health. Consequently, companies have made strategic long-term commitments to researching their products, forming alliances with universities and funding private research.

Another success factor lies in the education of the public through public relations campaigns, advertising and the multi-level marketing platform. Industry leaders are making great efforts to reach out to health and food journalists, as well as the healthcare community, with the results of the latest scientific studies.

Such efforts are paving a pathway for all other ingredients, products and platforms that have a healthy aura.



NP Nutra: Goji, Acai and Noni

Nature's Power Nutraceuticals Corp — known as NP Nutra — was founded in 1998 as a manufacturer of natural ingredients, with a special focus on antioxidants and other botanicals.

Based in Southern California, the company has manufacturing facilities in Hawaii, Brazil and China, where it processes a full line of exotic superfruits including acai, acerola, camu camu, goji (wolfberry), guarana, lo han guo, malabar tamarind, mangosteen, noni and pomegranate.

While other companies provide some of these ingredients, what makes NP Nutra unique, the company says, is its commitment to quality manufacturing.

"Botanists examine all of our raw materials, testing the organoleptic qualities (touch, outward appearance, odour and taste), and those that don't meet our quality standards are rejected," explains Jeff Lane, quality control manager. "We also guarantee that each production lot is free from all known sources of contaminants, undergoing HPTLC, UV, GC, HPLC and microbiological analysis."

Among its many product offerings, the company points to its goji ingredients as one of its most unique lines.

"The 10:1 goji concentrate is popular with manufacturers and end-users alike," explains Thomas Walton. "We receive about five containers a month of this product alone. Our Goji Powder 20% polysaccharide is water-soluble, has a great taste and does not cake up — unlike 95 per cent of all other goji powders in the industry. This makes it very versatile and easy to use. And our whole goji berries are wildcrafted and taste great. They are being used in many nutritional bars in the market."

NP Nutra also offers a nonfrozen acai puree with a super-high 25 per cent solids content. "This is twice as high as all common frozen acai purees," Walton says. "This nonfrozen acai puree essentially acts like a 4:1 concentrate and the fact that the product does not need to be frozen during transport or storage makes it a much easier and more versatile raw material to use for functional beverages."

The company also points to its noni products, sold under the name All-Noni, as another industry leader. The fruits are grown organically and are non-GMO, and the company oversees every step of production, from the farms in Hawaii to the processing and production facilities in Hawaii and California.

"We have been in the industry for eight years and know what the consumer demands," says Walton. "NP Nutra also is the only company to offer any complete private label package, helping develop new products from scratch and even helping with art design and packaging." www.npnutra.com