

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT SERIES



Carolyn Fisher received her B.S. from Wayne State Univ. (1972) and Ph.D. from Stanford Univ. (1978). Her career moved from Research (Kalsec, 1978–1991) to Teacher (Univ. of Delaware, 1992–1996) to Book Author (*Flavours: Biology & Chemistry*). At McCormick & Co., Carolyn moved from Quality Assurance (1996–2005) to Regulatory (2005–2010) to managing the electronic storage of knowledge (2011). Then Carolyn became a Senior Scientist working on a global regulatory food additive database known as gComply Plus (Decernis, 2012–2017). Although she is retired, she continues to work as a consultant for the company that purchased Decernis, which is FoodChainID.

As an active IFT member, Carolyn finished her term on the Board of Directors (2015–2018) and is currently the past-president of the local Maryland section of the IFT.

Here are a few questions we had the chance to ask Carolyn.

Tell us a little about yourself and your connection with Maryland IFT, we'd love to hear your story!!

I was on the National IFT board (2015–2018) when I heard that Maryland IFT lost their entire leadership group and was asked to help keep the section alive, so in 2019 we had a reorganization meeting and I volunteered to become President in 2020–2021 and helped put together all the documentation we needed to be a non-profit entity in the state of Maryland that the previous section leadership allowed to lapse. Then when we lost presidents-elect twice, I volunteered again to become President in 2024–2025.

What inspired you to pursue a career in the food industry?

When I graduated with my PhD, I expected to enter the Pharmaceutical Industry. However, my husband moved us to Battle Creek for his new job, and we had a one-year-old, so I applied for a teaching/research position at Kalamazoo college and asked for half of the job. The professor told me that he had told his boss that he would never obtain someone for a half-time position, so he did not give me the job, but called up the president of a company that he was consulting for and I had an interview on the spot with my one-year-old on my lap and obtained a part-time position. The company was the Kalamazoo Spice Extraction Company (KALSEC) and my entry into a career in the food industry.

Can you share a bit about your current role and how your work contributes to advancing food science, quality, policy or innovation?

My current position as past-President includes being Chair of the Nominations and Elections Committee which means I am responsible for getting new people into the leadership positions in MDIFT. I was also in charge of the Educational program at the MDIFT Supplier's Event this year as well as setting up the Communication Workshop on a Saturday at the University of Maryland.

What is one challenge or opportunity you see shaping the future of the food industry?

The MAHA group is spreading a lot of misinformation about substances used by the food industry which will change how a lot of processed food are made in the future.

What advice would you give to students or early-career professionals interested in building a career in this field?

Learn about global food regulations and how and why they are different in different regions.