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THE GOURMET RETAILER®

NATURAL PRODUCTS EXPO ISSUE
TREND REPORT: SMALL ELECTRICS
SPECIALTY CHEESE SERIES II
FALL COOKBOOK REVIEW

Editor's Choice



By Kristin V. Montalvo

1. HILDEGARD ALL-NATURAL HERBAL TEAS

The Austrian Hildegard Herbal Teas line caught my attention with its smart packaging and interesting story behind the creation of these little gems of herbal wisdom. Sonnentor has chosen a cross-section of numerous recipes and raw materials based on the principles of Hildegard von Bingen, a twelfth-century Austrian nun and leading lady of natural medicine, who believed that the body and the soul were connected and both need to be treated in case of illness. I thoroughly enjoyed sipping the Energy Herbal Tea one morning as this aromatic blend of hyssop, spearmint, fennel, rosehip and daisy really did energize and perk me up sans caffeine. During deadline, the Relaxing Herbal Tea, a blend of melissa, lavender, sage, parsley, fennel and marigold mellowed me out and has become my daily destressing staple. Also, I like the fact that the tea bags are 100% biodegradable, and unlike standard tea bags, the paper and tags contain no metal. I'm sold. To see the full line of herbal teas offered, visit www.sonnentor.com/usa and to order, call distributor Bellevie Company at 888-854-3380.

2. ORANGEX OJEX JUICER

I simply can't start my day without a glass of fresh squeezed OJ, but it has put a definite dent in my wallet. So I jumped at the chance to test out the ultra-mod Ojex Juicer at home. Made of very heavy (and I mean heavy) enameled cast iron with suction-cup feet for added stability, the juicer works on the principle of leverage — raise the arm to insert the citrus half, lower it to press

out the juice. In seconds, it extracts juice completely from all citrus fruits, whether small limes or lemons or large oranges and grapefruits, without any bitter rind oils, pulp, or seeds. Additional fruit attachments are also included to juice grapes, berries, apples, pineapples, tomatoes and other soft fruits. The rubber coating adds grip to the contoured arm, and a removable plastic base holds a bowl, a glass, or a short pitcher. While the juicer works in a simple manner and is a snap to clean (its stainless steel strainer and basket are both dishwasher safe), it does require a little muscle to push up and down on the arm. But it's just so darn cool looking that I don't mind the extra effort. Also available in fashion-forward cobalt, orange, black and white. Distributed by Amco Houseworks.

3. NATURAL CHOICE FULL OF FRUIT FROZEN FRUIT BARS

Natural Choice produces the first and to date only USDA-certified organic fruit bars on the market. Packed with whole pieces of real organic fruit, they're preservative free and contain only 70 calories. I sampled these cool treats one particularly steamy Miami afternoon and thought the exotic Mango and Coconut Flavors were to fantastic. Besides being refreshing, these fruit bars actually taste like — go figure — fruit. The Coconut flavor contains chunks of real organic coconut, filtered water, organic evaporated cane juice and organic coconut milk. No fluff or junk — just pure and simple ingredients. Available in five additional flavors, including Orange, Raspberry, Strawberry, Pink Lemonade and

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Grape. For more information, visit www.ncf-inc.com.

4. LEANING OAKS VINEYARDS WINE CONSERVES & SAUCES

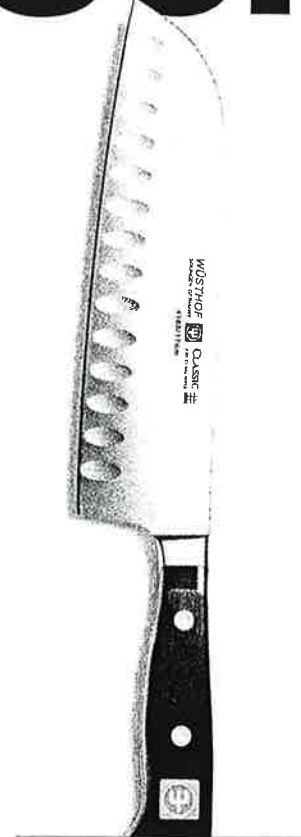
I was a bit skeptical when a batch of gourmet wine conserves and sauces from a vineyard in Texas arrived at my desk one day. I wouldn't bat an eyelash if it was from California, but Texas of all places? Sure enough, Leaning Oaks Vineyards is an estate vineyard located in the Texas Hill country where grapes are grown and then made into Cabernet, Zinfandel, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Sangiovese wine conserves and Cabernet and Chardonnay wine sauces. What differentiates these wine-based products is that you are the recipient of the full flavor and aroma of wine, minus the alcohol or sugar. How you ask? According to the company, grapes from the Hill Country vineyard, the Texas High Plains and California are fermented into wine and aged in oak. Grape concentrate from the same grape varietal is then added to keep the wine's unique aroma and flavor, minus the sugar. The end result is a light sweetness that comes only from sunlight and natural fruit. The conserves paired beautifully with a sampling of Brie and goat cheese, while the sauces made for effortless gourmet cooking applications. I was particularly fond of the Cabernet Sauvignon Sauce as a glaze for roast

chicken or simply drizzled on crepes. Prepared in small batches, each jar is a limited release. For more on this Texas vineyard, visit www.leaningoaksvineyards.com.

5. AIREGOURMET INSULATED BAKING SHEET

Until a few months ago, I had nearly given up on ever achieving perfectly baked chocolate chip cookies. You know, the chocolate wonders that are golden brown, chewy drops of heaven, not the kind with burned bottoms and tops that remain mushy and raw. Well, I am happy to report that I have found the solution for achieving cookie nirvana in the form of the AireGourmet Baking Sheet from Heartland Bakeware Co. It features two sheets of thick, anodized aluminum separated by an insulating layer of air, which truly does prevent overbaking and subsequent burning of baked goods. I should know. I conducted a little experiment one day by purposely trying to burn a small batch of cookies using this baking sheet. No luck. All I achieved was golden, brown and delicious results each and every time. You simply cannot burn cookies with this product. And the anodized aluminum prevents reactions with food, makes it safe to use with metal utensils, and is nearly as slippery as any non-stick. Plus, the unique ThumbGrip handle is safer and easy to grasp than most baking sheets. Call 866-456-0214 for more information on this baking wonder.

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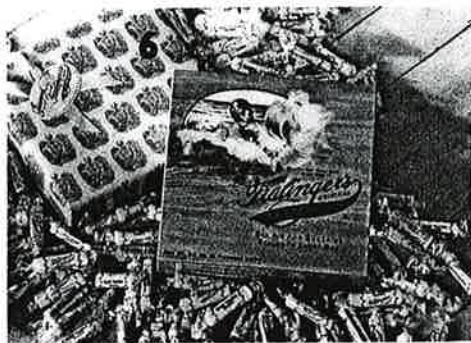
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6. FRALINGER'S SALT WATER TAFFY

When I spied the attractive box with fun retro graphics from Fralinger's Salt Water Taffy, I was immediately transported back to those fun summers spent on the famed boardwalk in Atlantic City, N.J. as a child. After biting into just one of their multitude of flavors, I was really impressed by both the freshness and the flavor. The smooth taffy surpassed



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even my culinary memories. I sampled several more and found my favorite to be the Root Beer, a taste sensation that reminded me of another treasured summer indulgence. The yummy, full-flavored Banana came in a close second. The variety of flavors available is astounding and mouthwatering and includes Chocolate, Peach, Strawberry, Molasses, Lemon and Lime, plus Licorice. Additionally, they have Sugar-Free, Chocolate-Dipped, Filled Centers and Fabulous Salt Water Taffy Flavors (for instance, The Tiki Bar has Bay Breeze, half pink, half yellow; Sea Breeze, half bright pink, half bright yellow; Mimosa, half yellow, half white; and Pina Colada, half white, half yellow). For more information, call 800-441-1404.

7. THE ART OF CHIPOTLE

Before I even tasted this line of gourmet chipotle sauces from Pfleider Pfoods, I was drawn to the bright and whimsical, eye-popping pepper-shaped head graphics on the front of each bottle. After tasting the Art of Chipotle sauces, I was in complete love with this funky fresh company that describes their products as "versatile sauces with a bold taste & pleasing heat for all ages, ethnicities & heat tolerances . . . from gringos to fire eaters!" My favorite was the brown sugar-based Sweet Heat Addiction, their signature sauce that's amazing on appetizers, pizza, grilled meats, fish and eggs. I especially enjoyed it mixed with whipped cream



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cheese as a zesty sweet spread. I substituted the Smokey Red Sensation for ketchup to spice up my turkey burger, and even drizzled the Crazzberry Fiesta over a ho-hum piece of chocolate cake to add a bit of berry pizzazz. These sauces are extremely versatile, all natural and contain no preservatives. For more information, visit www.chipotle-people.com.

8. THE OZONATOR

The Ozonator is touted as the first air purifier for the refrigerator that helps delay molding and decay of many foods — including fruits and vegetables, thereby helping them retain their freshness and flavor longer. According to the company, the Ozonator produces ozone at the site of use, and once activated (using 4 "D" size batteries); will generate ozone continuously for the first 60 minutes of operation and then automatically switch to standby mode for 170 minutes. Then, it activates itself to generate ozone for 10 minutes, repeating again and again for a cycle of 230 minutes until the batteries need replacement (usually every 3–4 months). Since the average household throws away 150 pounds of produce per year due to spoilage before use, I was more than happy to test this device. I loaded my vegetable and fruit bin with the typical fast-spoiling culprits, including fresh garlic, spinach leaves, basil, cut cantaloupe, strawberries and blueberries, and placed the Ozonator on the top shelf of my refrigerator. After a few hours, my once musty-smelling

Let it Joe!


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