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# Gourmet Food Industry Pushes Boundaries in Taste and Growth

BY CHANNALY PHILIPP  
EPOCH TIMES STAFF

NEW YORK—If old trading routes and spice trails had a home today, it would look something like the Jacob Javits Center did last weekend. Thousands of gourmet food products from 80 countries and regions were on show during the Fancy Food Show.

One trend in the specialty food industry is abundantly clear: It keeps growing. In 2012, specialty food sales in the U.S. was \$86 billion, up 14.3 percent from the previous year. The fastest-growing categories are energy bars and gels, shelf-stable functional beverages, and yogurt and kefir, according to the 2013 State of the Specialty Food Industry report.

Currently the largest specialty food category is cheese, followed by yogurt and kefir.

Interesting ingredient combinations are always an eye-

opener and the Specialty Food Association spotted some popping up across product categories, including the use of chia seeds (in parmesan crisps, a yogurt/pudding snack in fruit flavors), chickpeas (Saffron Road's flavors: Bombay spice, falafel and wasabi; The Good Bean's Thai coconut lemongrass as well as its chickpeas and fruit bars).

It is also clear that health continues to be a focus. Many companies touted products that are gluten-free and/or non-GMO.

Sourcing is a huge point of pride for companies who ensure high quality and ethical processes. A relatively recent label, B Corps, certifies businesses that operates in a sustainable manner, with an eye to social and environmental impact.

### Pride and Passion

On Monday night at Javits, keynote speaker and chef, Marcus Samuelsson, recognized the passion driving the entrepre-

neurial spirit in the room as he scanned the audience.

"Each one, whether it's the big companies ... looking at the small companies, or whether it's the young company that just really made this incredible peanut butter in their basement, eventually hoping they'll be in a big retail store one day."

Samuelsson said, "The great thing about restaurant is it can't be outsourced. Good food coming up from the basement, it can't be outsourced."

He recounted some of his own journey to the United States, with \$300 in his pocket, and a great deal of passion and hope.

He also called for continued exchange, reaching out—and arguing.

"I want to see hands, how many people argue at work?" he asked. "Good, good. I like it. Those who don't argue at work, you are not passionate enough for your work. Argue more."

Below is a selection of the soft award Gold winners that were announced Monday. (soft stands for "specialty outstanding food innovation")

### Outstanding Food Gift

**Bee Raw**  
Manhattan Rooftop Honey Flight

Bee Raw works with the New York Beekeeping Society to select rare rooftop honeys from the rooftops of Central Park West, Harlem, Hell's Kitchen, and the High Line.  
[www.beeraw.com](http://www.beeraw.com)

### Outstanding Chocolate

**Chocolat Moderne**  
Avant-Garde Bar Blood Orange Bergamot Flavor

Bergamot meets blood orange in this chocolate with bitter, floral notes and smooth, creamy texture.  
[www.chocolatmoderne.com](http://www.chocolatmoderne.com)

### Outstanding New Product

**Artisan Biscuits Ltd.**  
The Fine Cheese Co. Pearls of Pure Goats' Cheese

These delicate pearls of goat's cheese from the British Isles and Ireland are made from goat curd and marinated in sunflower oil scented with garlic and herbs.  
[www.artisanbiscuits.co.uk](http://www.artisanbiscuits.co.uk)

**\$86bn**

Specialty food sales in the U.S. in 2012



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## The People Behind the Newest Gourmet Foods

Continued from D1



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Missy Koo (L) and Stacy Cole, co-founders of Brooklyn Piggies.

### Making Pigs-in-a-Blanket Cool Again

Stacy Cole and Missy Koo debuted Brooklyn Piggies on Memorial Day 2012. The little pigs-in-a-blanket were such a hit at Smorgasburg last year that Oprah featured them in "Oprah's Favorite Things."

Spicy, original, and chicken are the three flavor options and Cole and Koo are proficient at rolling 4,000 piggies in an 8-hour shift. Koo, a handbag designer, had the original idea, and convinced Cole to join her. Cole is a classically trained opera singer who was working for an aerospace company.

The two have a kiosk at South Street Seaport and the little piggies have been shipped across the U.S. since Nov. 2012.

**Brooklyn Piggies** | [www.brooklynpiggies.com](http://www.brooklynpiggies.com)



CHARLOTTE CUTHBERTSON/EPOCH TIMES

Andrew Templar from Floyd Eats, LLC.

### Beer Cheese, From Kentucky to NYC

Andrew Templar tests his beer cheese dips on his patrons at Floyd Bar, his bar in Brooklyn.

The Kentucky native couldn't find beer cheese in New York, so he and a friend made their own. Beer cheese is a traditional Kentucky snack cheese dip made with sharp cheddar cheese, spices, and a drop of beer.

"It's a little bit spicy with a little bit of heat and absolutely perfect for any and every occasion," the Floyd Eats website says.

The bacon flavored one is popular in Williamsburg and Crown Heights; the jalapeño is the most popular overall—especially with the Smorgasburg crowd; and the original does consistently well all around. Floyd Eats hit retail stores in November and can be found in several gourmet outlets in Brooklyn and Manhattan.

**Floyd Eats** | [www.floydeats.com](http://www.floydeats.com)



CHARLOTTE CUTHBERTSON/EPOCH TIMES

Vanessa Miller, founder of Get Dressed Salads, LLC.

### Crowdfunding Dressings

Vanessa Miller crowdsourced her business into reality. Get Dressed Salads got its start through Indiegogo, a crowdfunding platform similar to Kickstarter.

A teacher for seven years, Miller brought the blackboard to her business by way of the black label on her bottles. The blackboard represents getting started, she said.

The idea germinated two years ago and Get Dressed Salads now has four flavors: Ginger Gem, Perfect Pepper, Lemon Love, and Va Va Voom Vinaigrette.

The dressings started hitting the gourmet shelves eight months ago, and just this week Miller signed a distribution deal.

**Get Dressed Salads** | [www.getdressedsalads.com](http://www.getdressedsalads.com)



CHARLOTTE CUTHBERTSON/EPOCH TIMES

Becky Kestenbaum (L), founder and CEO of a novelty bonbon business, stands with her sister at the Javits Center.

### Bonbons, a Sweet Morsel

Becky Kestenbaum's life took a serendipitous turn one evening as she was puddling around in the kitchen. Wanting something sweet, she ended up creating her own version of a bonbon—a novelty dessert that should be served chilled.

Six months later, Becky's Bites launched with six flavors of bonbon, including New York cheesecake, peanut butter, cappuccino, chocolate-covered strawberry, salted caramel, and cookies and cream. Kestenbaum had been working in an art gallery, and cooking was a passion on the side. Now, they have switched places and cooking is the focus, while art is the hobby.

Becky's Bites sell in Grace's Marketplace on the Upper East Side as well as online. Catering and personalizing the treats is a growing market for Kestenbaum.

**Becky's Bites** | [www.beckysbitesnyc.com](http://www.beckysbitesnyc.com)



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