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Editor's Choice

By Michelle Moran

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The summer months were teeming with new introductions from manufacturers and newcomers who submitted products to us for review. My personal table overflowed with products I thought were dandy at first glance, inspiring me to take them home from the office or request more details at a show so I could test them out for myself. And for the first time this year, I had a hard time narrowing my choices down to our allotted 10 finalists each month. But nevertheless, here's my pick of new and new-again products that made me smile.



Applegate Farms Great Organic Hot Dog

A better hot dog would be a relief to many parents. And in our household, it was a blessing. With a six-year-old whose favorites are hot dogs and strawberries (much to our culinary dismay), a good-for-you hot dog is a welcome treat. Made of beef from cattle raised on grass, these dogs have only 8 grams of fat compared to the average 15 grams in most brands. Resembling those plump, salty, chemically pink dogs served on buns at sporting events and from street carts, our initial impression was they can't taste as good as they look. Getting the texture of nitrate-free grass-fed beef to mimic a mass-market hot dog is tricky. But even with all its healthy attributes, this dog received an enthusiastic thumbs up from 6-year-old Joshua. (And we liked it, too.) And with a suggested price of \$4.99 a pound, a dollar or so more than a pound of Ball Park franks, it doesn't hurt to upgrade. Check them out for yourself by calling 908-725-5800, or visiting www.applegatefarms.com.



i-Roast2

Who is really going to roast their own coffee beans? Your customers will, once they test this bad boy. This

product screams demonstration. And once your customers sample the results (be sure to roast beans the day before your demonstration since the beans are best served a day after roasting), they'll also want one. I'm not giving up this tested model. Not only does it roast a great bean to my own specifications, but it's fun to watch and makes the house smell like freshly roasted coffee. The unit has up to 10 memory functions and up to five stages. The user can set up roasting curves, or use preset ones — at each roasting stage, temperature is accurately controlled. This function is usually found on only the most sophisticated machines that cost thousands of dollars and is the very first time it has been used in a home roaster. The iRoast2 enables users to program the roaster with their own roasting profiles. It was a little difficult to figure it out at first, but then I sometimes have problems programming our television. Each of these profiles allows up to five temperature/time pairs. Each temperature setting can be programmed in the range of 320° – 485° F in five-degree increments, and the time can be programmed for each step in one-second increments up to a total of 15 minutes for the entire roast cycle. And it's just plain fun. Check it out at www.i-roast.com (where you can also order beans), or call 888-287-0763.



FungusAmongUs Truffle Gatherer's Sauce

Part of its new Savini line, this rich and flavorful sauce contains Champignon mushrooms, black olives, capers, black truffle, anchovies, salt and olive oil paired with the aroma of truffle to add to the sensory overload. According to the story, this sauce was created to stretch a small batch when the truffle gatherers came home with only a few truffles. Also be on the lookout for Savini's new Italian Truffle and Italian Porcini salts, which retail for \$16.95 for 3.5 ounces. They arrived right under the wire for my column, with just a moment to sample. But once I opened the jar and smelled the truffles' sweet, pungent glory, I could not forego mentioning them since they rival their much more costly counterparts. For information on the complete line, visit www.fungusamongus.com, or call 360-568-3403.



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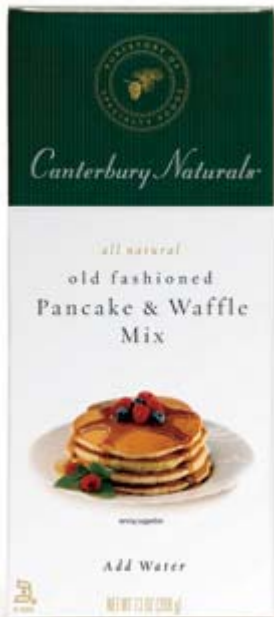
True Fabrications Wine Totes

Fun, functional, friendly — yes, I am describing wine totes. But these really are refreshingly, beautifully designed totes that are available at reasonable prices and just in time for the holiday season and winter entertaining. I love the chic Modern Art Collection, which the company notes is perfect for classy nights and trendy wines. Suggested retail is \$5.95. Call 800-750-8783 or check them out at www.truefabric.com.



Hancock Gourmet Lobster Islesboro Seafood Newburg

This company always serves up decadent lobster fare, but this Newburg even swayed my chef-partner who returned for seconds (and thirds). While the retail price is nothing to sneeze at with a suggested retail of \$42.00 to \$58.00, the rich, creamy, sinful mixture of Maine shrimp, lobster, crab and scallops is a great special occasion dish. And if you consider it has a nine-month shelf life in the freezer and that a quart container can serve up dinner for four to six people paired with pasta and a salad, then it becomes quite reasonable to keep on hand for those last-minute guests. (Also available in half-gallon foodservice bags.) For details, call 800-552-0142.



Canterbury Naturals All Natural Old Fashioned Pancake Mix

Conifer's line of premium all-natural foods just keeps getting bigger and better. With a new packaging redesign last year and great new introductions, this brand keeps improving. We recently tested the Old Fashioned Pancake & Waffle Mix (complemented with a cup of their Vanilla White Hot Chocolate Mix), and found it stacked up nicely against our favorite house brand. The kids dove in without question, not sparing a second breath as they reached for seconds. I like the fact that it's a versatile mix with instructions on the box for waffles or Baked German Pancakes (plus, there are more recipes online). And all you need to do is add water. Call 800-588-9160, or visit www.conifer-inc.com.



Big Acres Gourmet Barbecue Sauces

With six flavors to choose from, these sauces from Melanie's Fine Foods, Inc. provide plenty of flavor and a friendly kick without overpowering foods. We first tested Rich & Mild and found that it nicely complemented roasted chicken, creating a nice coating with its mix of honey and molasses. The pure maple syrup flavor peeked through, making a great finishing sauce for a variety of foods. There isn't a lot of sugar in this line, so you don't get that overly sweet taste. Plus, there are absolutely no preservatives, fat or MSG — yep, it's all natural, made simply with tomato puree, sugar, cider vinegar, honey, dark molasses, salt, brown sugar, pure maple syrup, spices, corn starch, hot sauce and orange peel. Call 650-593-9301 for details, or visit www.bigacres.com.



All-Clad Oval Roaster

My first thought when I unpacked this roaster was "this is my new all-round pan." I have a habit of attaching myself to a new pan and using it for everything. The simple fact that I use stainless steel for most of my cooking applications (except of course when cast iron or copper are the only suitable selections) makes me a little giddy when a new size and style are introduced. My second thought was "Finally, a pan I can use that will work perfectly with my bridge element stovetop!" Introduced in July, the 17-inch open roaster is a versatile option perfect for longer cuts, such as leg of lamb, roast chicken or monkfish, and roasted vegetables. It also has high sides that prevent spillovers on the stovetop and sturdy riveted handles, making it easy to bring it from the oven to the table. Suggested retail is \$300. Call 800-255-2523 for details.



V&V Energy Drink

V&V Energy Premium Berry Drink is packed with flavor and doesn't leave you jittery like some other high-test drinks. With guarana, ginseng, ginkgo and taurine, this sparkling beverage boosts you with vitamins and a tease of juice (3%). With 165 calories per serving (and a whole bottle is a serving, unlike many other energy/fruit drinks), it's a refreshing afternoon pick-me-up. The only downside is the 40 grams of both sugars and carbs, but sometimes, you just have to indulge. For more information, e-mail info@vandvenery.com.



Victorinox Cutlery Collection

There are plenty of great knives out there from longstanding Wusthof-Trident and J.A. Henckels to newcomer Kershaw (KIA) to artisan craftsmen making collectible blades. Everyone has their favorite brand — I'm a knife junkie with a collection of Kershaw and Wusthof-Trident that would make any chef drool. Still, if you ask a group of chefs about their favorite, you'll find yourself with a list representing the most unmanageable inventory. Now Swiss Army Brands, Inc. is heading to the kitchen with its new Victorinox Forged Cutlery line made in Solingen, Germany, according to the specifications of the Victorinox designers. Put to the test, this line is sharp from the start with nice window packaging that can both hang or serve as a gift box. The knives themselves are

well-designed with a smart ergonomic grip handle while still sporting traditional German-engineered appearance and functionality. The 8-inch Chef's Knife (suggested retail \$115.00), in particular, satiated my desires. "Perfectly balanced" are the best words to describe this new forged kitchen knife range. For more information, call 800-243-4057, or check out www.swissarmy.com.

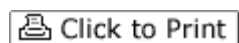
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