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Salt, Spice And Everything Nice

NEW YORK, Aug. 23, 2005

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Fancy Food Trends For '06



(Photo: CBS/The Early Show)



(Photo: CBS/The Early Show)

(CBS) The 51st **Fancy Food Show** this summer in New York City featured thousands of food items, from drinks and snacks to cheeses and chocolates.

The Early Show asked Dana Cowin, the editor-in-chief of **Food and Wine magazine**, to share some of what she believes will be big food trends this fall.

She talks about the following four trends and her favorite products:

Trend 1: Chocolate from single-origin cocoa beans and super luxe chocolate bars and candies.

People have gone "nuts for high-end chocolate" says Cowin. She notes that people are willing to pay for "high-priced" chocolates because they love the taste and quality. She points out that even the mass-chain chocolate retailer, Godiva, provides a high-end chocolate line for consumers.

High-end chocolates have a higher percentage of cacao. "What you'll also see and hear about high-end chocolates this year is similar to what you hear about good wine," Cowin says. "High-end chocolate makers believe in 'terroir' — the idea of that certain land areas provide the best chocolate. Certain high-end chocolate makers are now using the terms 'single vintage' to indicate that certain origins result in better-tasting chocolates as well."

Cowin says consumers are also much more savvy about the quality of their chocolate, and chocolate companies are responding by including a percentage, like 62 percent, 70 percent, even 90 percent on their labels.

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She has selected the following chocolate makers as the standard bearers of fine chocolate as well the trendsetters.

- Hagensborg Chocolate: The company is making truffles, with Callebaut chocolate, in unusual shapes, (frogs etc.) and has redesigned its packaging to look like a frothy pink fairy tale. It is available in early September.
- Fran's Chocolate: Nominated for this year's confection award, Fran's has begun producing its bars in single-origin varieties. From Ecuador is the 70 percent bar, and from Venezuela is the 60 percent and the Dark Milk bars.
- Chocolat Moderne: Cowin's favorites are the Tropic of Cocoa Petit Bon Bon line — six ganache truffles, unflavored, representing different territories. Plus, there is a new hot cocoa line: Snake Charmer with anise, cinnamon and vanilla; Midnight Oasis, dark chocolate; Kama Sutra with coconut, cardamom and clove; and Madame X-tasy, salted espresso. Available at www.chocolatmoderne.com.
- Dagoba Chocolate: These are all organic. Single Origin bars are its newest line — Los Rios from Ecuador, Pacuare from Costa Rica and the newest of the three is Milagros from Peru. The company is also coming out with smaller versions, in 9-gram size, of the single-origin line, with the idea that people could pair them with food and wine. Available at www.dagobachocolate.com.
- Guittard: 2-oz. bars (for individual consumption) and 1-kilo bars (for home cooking) of single-origin chocolate from Madagascar, Colombia and Venezuela. Available at www.guittard.com.

Trend 2: American Artisan Cheeses and Luxe Cheese Accompaniments

Twenty-five years ago, Americans didn't really know how to make great, hand-crafted cheese. But over the years, Cowin says, American cheese makers have learned a thing or two from their French counterparts. And they are more aware of the various elements that go into the process, such as grass and their cows.

In addition to American cheese, consumers want gourmet condiments to serve with cheese.

"It's similar to the idea of having wine with cheese. Except here we take the 'grape' and turn it into a jam or paste," says Cowin about these new cheese condiments. Here are her favorite products:

- Palette: Cowin's favorites cheese condiments are Purple Basil Jelly (6.3-oz jar costs \$8.95) and Golden Raspberry Jam (6.3-oz jar for \$9.95). Available at www.palettedefinefoods.com.
- Chelsea Market Basket: It includes five new jams from France (Brand: L'Epicurean) designed to pair with specific cheeses: Confit D'Ananas au Poivre de Penja (Pineapple with Penja Pepper); Confit de Cidre a la Pomme et au Calvados (Cider Confit with Apple and Calvados); Confit de Cerise Noire (Black Cherry Confit); Confit de Figs aux Noix (Fig with Walnut Confit), Confit de Vin Blanc a la Poire Williams (Pear White Wine Confit). It also has a new Wheat Crisp Cracker that just won an award. Available at www.chelseamarketbaskets.com.
- Kurt Beecher Damier: It has handcrafted cheese (cheddar or jack cheese) and the Chili Jam to be paired with the cheese. The Wild Thymes Roasted Chili Garlic Sauce (11-oz.jar for \$6.99). Also from this company is Matiz Fig Bread (\$6.45) and La Corazon Quince Paste (\$3.95). Available at www.beechershandmadecheese.com

some stories to whet your appetite for the season.

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Dana Cowin of Food and Wine magazine joined **The Early Show** with some of the hottest new food trends for 2006, showcased at the 51st Annual Fancy Food Convention.

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Trend 3: Exotic Salts

Just when Americans were getting used to kosher salt, here is a whole slew of great, exotic salts.

- **Soul of the Sea by Hawaii Kai:** Made through a patent-pending process. Ocean water is first purified to FDA bottled-water standards, then dried in sealed solar pans to protect the salt from birds, insects and dust. Contains only 84 percent sodium chloride, plus 16 percent of the ocean's 80 electrolytes, trace minerals and elements. (12-oz. jars for \$29.50). Available at Sur La Table and www.SouloftheSea.net.
- **The French Farm:** The French Farm has begun importing a line of salts, peppers and condiments called Terre Exotique. Its fleur de sel from Saint Leu is rich in magnesium and calcium. The manufacturer seasons its salts with grilled spices and lemon zest. Salts and the peppers are about \$15. Available at www.gourmetcountry.com.
- **Smoked Sea Salt from Wales from Chelsea Market Basket:** Anglesey Smoked Salt costs \$10.50. It is great for hors d'oeuvres, potatoes, or on anything that would benefit from a hint of smokiness. The Cape Herb Fleur de Sel costs \$6.95. Available at www.chelseamarketbaskets.com.
- **Himalyan Pink Salt:** The natural, unrefined and unpolluted salt is rich in elements and minerals like calcium, magnesium, potassium, copper and iron. Iron is the naturally rich element that creates the pink color of the salt. (8 3/4-oz. box for \$11.95). Available at www.himalania.com

Trend 4: Ethnic Sauces

- **Bombay Emerald Chutney Company:** Cowin loved the Royal Plum, Royal Mint and Royal Cranberry. Available at www.bombayemeraldchutneyco.com
- **Rick Bayless Sauces from Fronterra Grill:** These are starter sauces to help save time with the cooking process. Available at **Williams-Sonoma**.

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