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Featuring Pixie Maté in July 12, 2006 issue of
The New York Times: Dining Out. Circulation: 1,142,462

At the Fancy Food Show, Promoting Everyday Luxuries

By FLORENCE FABRICANT

WITH items that were once hard to find, like Manchego cheese or French sea salt, now mainstream, it might seem that exhibitors at the 52nd Fancy Food Show would go to extremes to appear cutting edge.

But the show, which ended its three-day run yesterday at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York, was characterized more by the quality of artisanal

Will pecan oil, maté and verjus be commonplace?

products, both domestic and imported, than by their gimmickry.

Trends, though, were still evident. There were 290 products flavored with pomegranate this year, compared with 130 last year. Dufour Pastry Kitchens has an hors d'oeuvre of rolled North African pastry filled with roasted red peppers and pomegranate molasses. Honest Tea introduced a line of drinks called Honest Ade that included pomegranate blue, with blueberries. Gus Soda's newest flavor is pomegranate.

Many of the often exotic coffees and teas emphasized Fair Trade production. Among the product awards that were announced Monday evening by the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade, which runs the show, was the one for outstanding beverage given to Ineeka, a tea company based in Chicago, for its Tréleela Spearmint

Lavender Charm tea. Maté, the South American herbal drink, has been designed and flavored for American consumers by a company called Pixie Maté. Bottled drinks were flavored with mint, ginger and aloe.

Artisanal Premium Cheese's cheesecake won the outstanding new product award.

With an abundance of olive oils and balsamic vinegars, blessed relief came from Salute Santé's lovely verjus, La Tourangelle's new roasted pistachio and pecan oils and De Medici's thick, fresh-tasting new fruit vinegars.

Tons of cheeses were on display, and there was also a profusion of condiments to accompany them, the latest accessories for cheese: honeys and intense fruit spreads, including Mt. Vikos apricot-almond and fig-hazelnut varieties.

As a change of pace from the usual wasabi peas, Feridies, from Courtland, Va., showed tantalizing wasabi peanuts.

Companies that used to specialize in imported caviar, the importation of which has been restricted to protect endangered sturgeons, had more diversified portfolios that included pâtés and smoked fish.

Urbani is trying to convince Americans that truffles can be everyday stuff, with a line of frozen truffled entrees.

A surprise in the Lion Pavilion from Chengdu in China was an array of canned tomatoes and tomato pastes. (Did somebody say the Chinese invented pasta?)

And when you see shelf-stable jars of hummus and unusual preserves imported from Egypt in stores, their labels will say Mom's Foods. "We thought it was a good name," said Sean Gouda, a representative of the company that seems to be trying to make the exotic sound commonplace.

To a large extent, that was the story of this show.

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