

## Rollout!

### A flock of Fancy Food favorites

Upscale, convenient are catch phrases at NASFT show.

BY JOAN HOLLERAN

I didn't have an absolute favorite from this winter's Fancy Food Show in San Francisco—I had three! There were so many wonderful products at the show, and although I could narrow the list down, I couldn't go any further than the three that follow. This isn't a contest, but these three products won my heart—and my palate.

#### Via Ventresca One-Step Kitchen Masterpieces

Of the three, Via Ventresca One-Step Kitchen Masterpieces has the greatest mainstream appeal. The Mountain View, Calif.-based company makes top-of-the-line, gourmet meals a reality for busy families.

Company owner Patrice Ventresca has been in the catering business for years, and has just launched the retail segment of the company. The first products making their way to market are Bouillabaisse and Punjabi Curry Sauce; each represents lines of items to come.

"The ingredients (in One-Step Kitchen Masterpieces) are atypical of the canned products on the market," says Ventresca. "The canning process undermines the quality of the food... It's the same convenience as the (simmer sauces) on the market, but the quality is of a much greater magnitude."

I have to agree. Patrice does the work I'd have my husband do if he had the time. But even if we had the time, we couldn't afford to make the dishes Patrice makes for us. One-pound containers are sold frozen in the meat, poultry and seafood sections and retail for about \$4 to \$5. Each is served with an equal weight of meat, poultry, seafood or vegetables for four to six diners.

Via Ventresca One-

and more people today are wanting to taste the cuisines of the world... people are tired of canned foods."

#### G&G Foods' gourmet spreads

I'm sure I made a nuisance of myself by spending too much time nibbling at the G&G Foods booth, maker of the Goldy's line of gourmet spreadable cheeses and La Torta 3-layer gourmet spreads, but they were polite and didn't chase me away.

The spreads are made with fresh farmstand ingredients and it's evident with every bite. Varieties include Pacific Northwest Salmon with Dill; Artichoke & Crab; Black Bean and Cheddar Cheese; Roasted Pepper & Jalapeno Jack Cheese; Sun-dried Tomato & Smoked Mozzarella; Horseradish & Scallion; Spinach with Water Chestnuts; Roasted Garlic & Fine Herbs (my favorite); and Triple Onion.

Both spreads and tortas are available in seven-ounce tubs retailing for \$3.49. The spreads are refrigerated and have a 60-day shelf life; they contain a modicum of potassium sorbate as a preservative. The tortas contain no preservatives, are shipped frozen and have a 28-day shelf life.

Partners Chris Glab and Rick Goldberg have been in business in San Francisco for three years. Their philosophy is simple enough: "We can deliver a better cheese spread using the freshest

possible herbs and highest quality cheeses," Glab told me. The herbs are IQF, "the cleanest and closest to fresh as possible."

What's next for G&G? Glab and Goldberg aren't saying much, but if you look at what's hot in restaurants there may be a clue. Polenta? Goat cheese? Stay tuned for unveilings this summer. "Ideas are the easy part," says Glab. "Delivering is the hard part."

#### City Bites' Coquilles

Last but not least is Burlingame, Calif.-based City Bites, makers of Coquilles—which are as tough to describe as they are to pronounce.

What I am sure of is that they are frozen, bake and serve appetizers of the finest taste and quality. The true pronunciation is "co-key" and they're named after the French, shell-shaped pan they're baked in.

They're a lot like mini souffles, but a little denser. The consistency reminds me of quiche without the crust.

Coquilles owner Paula Hoffman, who also has some history in catering, used to make them for her business and entertaining. Varieties include Mushroom Chive, Broccoli Cheddar, Eggplant Pesto and Parmesan Zucchini. Boxes of 12 retail for \$5.99.

I like the name—even if I can't pronounce it. It's a unique but truly elegant product that's tough to describe, so an exotic name that's tough to pronounce fits.



Patrice Ventresca is bringing upscale meals to the freezer case.

Step Kitchen Masterpieces are currently available in Northern California and other select markets west of the Mississippi.

"I don't see it as a specialty item," says Ventresca. "More