

9 HOME GROWN *Gourmet* TREATS Living Deliciously in Colorado

by CARRI WILBANKS



BUYING LOCAL has never been so tasty. And it is becoming easier than ever as more Colorado entrepreneurs create culinary delights that are popping up on store shelves across the state. We uncovered the stories behind some of the most delicious products to emerge from the Centennial State. The spread includes cowgirl popcorn, gourmet peanuts, innovative ice cream flavors and sausage made with Old World tradition. Whether you prefer sweet or savory, something is sure to make your taste buds sing.

I MULAY'S SAUSAGE Crested Butte

"Get your sausages hea, peppas 'n' onions on a homemade bun!" With this battle cry, a family recipe that's been passed down for five generations and a desire to make an all-natural product, Mulay's sausage was born. Loree Mulay Weisman first started toying with the idea of starting her own sausage company after attending an Italian street festival in New York. "Everyone was eating sausage and peppers," Weisman said. "They were just as bad as I thought they would be. I thought, 'We can make ones better than this.'" Recreating her Nana's recipe from Sicily, Weisman and husband, Ward, successfully debuted their homemade sausage and pepper sandwiches at a Fourth of July Festival in their hometown of Crested Butte, serving more than 400 to the crowd.

Nearly a quarter-century later, the sausage, made of freshly ground pork and spices from the Rocky Mountain Spice Co., is sold across 20 states. Flavors include original, hot, mild and "Killer Hot" Italian sausage, in addition to a breakfast and chorizo sausage.

*Available online, at Natural Grocers by Vitamin Cottage, Alfalfa's and other specialty grocers.

2MM LOCAL Denver

You can get Colorado-grown, organic produce regardless of the season thanks to Denver cannery MM Local and its collaboration with 15 Colorado farmers. “Our goal is to make this food available year round, and to make it easier for people to eat local foods,” said MM Local co-owner Jim Mills. “I remember when we were just recipe-testing in my kitchen and using my basement as storage. A lot of people were wondering who these two crazy guys are starting up a canning company.”

Mills founded the company in 2009 with his business partner, Ben Mustin. Having outgrown a commercial kitchen in Arvada, orders are now filled out of a Denver warehouse. Last fall alone, MM Local canned 140,000 pounds of produce, including Paonia Pears, Spicy Dill Cucumber Pickles, High Desert Peppers, Jonny Applesauce and Boulder Beets.

*Available at Tony’s Markets, Whole Foods and King Soopers.



Colo-waiian Pizza

In a small cast-iron or non-stick skillet, heat olive oil at medium-low heat. Add garlic dice to oil and saute until just brown (30-45 seconds). Pour in one jar MM Local Tomatoes with juice and bring to a simmer, gently chopping tomatoes with a wooden spoon to separate.

Allow tomatoes to simmer on low or medium-low heat for 5 minutes or until slightly thicker. Roll out pizza dough into a flat 1/4-inch rectangle or circle on a lightly floured cutting board or counter-top. With a wooden spoon, scoop tomatoes onto the dough and spread evenly until lightly covered.

Sprinkle pizza with grated cheese to taste. Add meat, peaches and chile peppers. Bake 15-25 minutes or until done at 450°. Slice and serve.

- 1 pizza dough (purchased or homemade)
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 medium clove garlic, diced
- 1 jar MM Local tomatoes (with Basil or Rosemary)
- 1/2 jar MM Local Peaches with Honey, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1/2 jar MM Local Chiles (hot or mild)
- 1 cup grated mozzarella cheese
- cooked Italian sausage, pepperoni, prosciutto or Canadian bacon

Serves 2



3 LOREDANA'S Denver

From 300 pounds of fresh basil and one local farmer's candid observation, a business idea was born. A tour through the Colorado countryside to purchase ingredients for her family's restaurant led to the chance meeting that sparked Loredana Ottoborgo's successful line of Northern Italian, artisanal products. "We bought so much basil it filled the back of my dad's Ford truck," Ottoborgo recalls. "The farmer couldn't imagine why we needed so much. When I told her we make pesto, she suggested I started selling it at farmers' markets."

And so it began. When Ottoborgo wasn't working at her family's restaurant, she was making pounds of pesto and handwriting labels, promoting her products all over the Front Range. As demand grew, Ottoborgo expanded her selection to include small batches of marinated cheeses, marmalades and tapenades adapted from coveted family recipes.

Ottoborgo still remembers the moment her farmers' market hobby turned into a fledgling business. "I was 23 at the time," she said. "My father came to me and said, 'Loredana, we have no cheese and no garlic! I am proud of you, but you have to buy your own ingredients!'" The following day she opened her first supplier account, and the rest is delicious history.

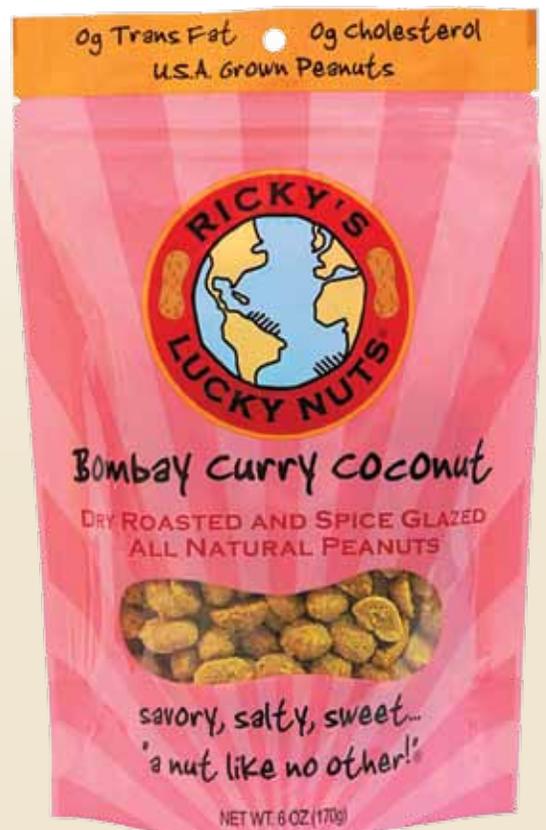
*Available online, and at Whole Foods and Great Harvest Bread Co.

4 RICKY'S LUCKY NUTS Durango

Scribbled on a tattered piece of yellow paper and tossed in a drawer, the recipes for Ricky's Lucky Nuts were nearly forgotten. Durango restaurateur Paul Gelose initially shrugged off the potential of the gourmet peanuts. "It surprised me," Gelose said. "I thought we were doing much bigger things than peanuts. We used to put them on the bar. People loved them so much they weren't buying appetizers, so we stopped." The rave reviews of a local caterer and a visit by Oprah Winfrey has put Ricky's Lucky Nuts on the map. Gelose is Winfrey's former personal chef, and he was among those she visited while road-tripping from coast to coast. "When Oprah was driving across the country with her best friend Gayle, she surprised us," he said. "So of course I sent her home with a test batch."

Gelose's innovative take on peanuts amps up flavor by dry roasting small batches and seasoning them with spices from around the world. Among the four savory flavors are Bombay Curry Coconut and Spicy Chile Chipotle, while the Cocoa and Vanilla Bean varieties are sure to please any sweet tooth.

*Available online, and at City Market, Whole Foods, Tony's Markets and other specialty grocers.





5 BLAKE'S UGLY DAWG SALSA

Colorado Springs

Crisp autumn air has always signaled salsa-making season for the Hyche family. Made from Pueblo-roasted chiles and other Colorado-sourced ingredients, Blake's Ugly Dawg Salsa is handcrafted in small batches. Salsa aficionados can choose between mild, medium or hot chunky green chile. "We never use frozen ingredients and jar our salsa immediately," said creator Geoff Hyche.

Spurred on by friends and family, Hyche delved into the salsa-making business after losing his son, Blake, for whom the salsa is named. Blake's commitment to the salsa served as a source of inspiration, jumpstarting the business. "I could hear Black say, 'Dad, we've got to get this on the market,' every time I opened a jar," recalled Hyche. "We decided to make it available to the public to fulfill Blake's dream."

*Available at King Soopers, Whole Foods.

Banana Bread Muffins with Ricky's Bombay Curry Coconut Peanuts

- 1 banana bread recipe prepared, but not cooked
- 6 oz Ricky's Bombay Curry Coconut Peanuts (3 small bags)
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup all purpose flour
- 1/2 stick softened butter

8-12 muffins

Add Ricky's Bombay Curry Coconut Peanuts, brown sugar and softened butter to a food processor and blend until mixture is crumbly. If necessary, add the flour to give the mixture a less clumpy feel.

Pour prepared banana bread recipe into 8-12 lined muffin tins. Add peanut crumble mixture to the top of each muffin, covering thoroughly. Bake according to your banana bread recipe.

6 SOSI'S HEALTHY PLEASURES

Littleton

Cherished Armenian family recipes are at the foundation of Sosi's Healthy Pleasures. Combining vegetables with yogurt, owner and creator Sosi Bocchierian creates unique yogurt dips that include Roasted Red Pepper, Artichoke Dill and Spinach Jalapeño. Set apart from other yogurts by a multiple straining process, Sosi's yogurt is both thicker and creamier than many other variations.

After leaving the old country to escape political unrest, Sosi discovered a passion for cooking in her new surroundings in Colorado. She now is passing on her Armenian heritage and recipes to her daughters, Arpi and Salpi. "We learn a lot about managing business interaction and pushing forward against all odds," Sosi said. Salpi added: "Seeing my mom's business makes me think of starting my own. I think we are pretty lucky to experience something most people don't experience until much later in life."

*Available at Whole Foods, Natural Grocers By Vitamin Cottage, Marczyk Fine Foods and other specialty grocers.



Sosi's Grilled Salmon

For the salmon, heat coals in an outdoor grill and brush the top of the grill with extra virgin olive oil. Rub the outside of the salmon with extra virgin olive oil, salt and pepper. Grill 5 minutes on each side, or until the salmon is almost cooked through. Remove to a plate and allow it to rest for 15 minutes.

To assemble the sandwiches, slice the rolls crosswise in half. Spread generously Sosi's Armenian Yogurt - Artichoke Dill flavor on each cut side. On the bottom half, place some mesclun salad and then a piece of salmon. Place the top of the roll on the salmon and serve immediately.

- 2 pounds fresh salmon fillets
- extra virgin olive oil
- sea salt
- freshly ground pepper
- 1 container Sosi's Armenian Yogurt - Artichoke Dill flavor
- 6 fresh brioche rolls (4-inch round)
- 1/4 pound mesclun salad mix

Serves 6

7 SWEET ACTION ICE CREAM

Denver

Turning heads by churning up innovative flavors, Denver's Sweet Action Ice Cream has become a South Broadway staple, serving up scoops of Salted Butterscotch, Lemon Ricotta and their famous Stranahan's Whiskey Brickle. Vegan options (made with coconut milk) and sorbets are among the flavors that change daily. A true local establishment, the ice cream is handmade with Colorado milk and cream.

Sweethearts Sam Kopicko and Chia Basinger took a leap of faith and pooled their savings to see if their home hobby could stand as a business. "We had a lot of good feedback on our homemade ice cream," Kopicko said. "We both weren't thrilled with our jobs and thought what if?" Nearly four years later, "What if?" has become "What next?" as they delve into new ice cream territory.

*Available at Tony's Markets, in Denver at Marczyk Fine Foods and The Tattered Cover on Colfax, in Greenwood Village at Two Mile Ranch and in Boulder at Lucky's.

8 POMM CHOCOLATE Denver

Tempting aromas waft from the Denver Urban Homesteading Market where chocolate entrepreneurs Katelyn Fox and Damaris Graves create handcrafted bean-to-bar chocolate. These inventive confectioners of POMM Chocolate offer chocolate lovers unique flavors like Cranberry-Ginger, Puffed Amaranth and Espresso Brittle & Sea Salt using fair-trade cocoa beans imported from the Dominican Republic and Peru.

POMM Chocolate does more than just create handcrafted treats. When Fox and Graves needed to add employees to help them, they wanted to give a chance to those who are sometimes overlooked in the job market, so they decided to hire two people with autism. “Chris is very detail orientated,” Graves said. “He always notices the beans that should have been sorted out. And Andrew is so, so strong. I don’t know how we would break the blocks of cocoa butter without him.” Graves said the team of four is passionate about chocolate. Their passion also is fueled by a purpose, and that makes any chocolate extra sweet.

*Available in Denver at the Denver Art Museum and Denver Urban Homesteading, and in Greenwood Village at Two Mile Ranch.



9 TOO HAUTE COWGIRLS POPCORN Basalt

When popcorn addicts Deanna Liebl and Amy Tarrant teamed up for business, they aspired to create sophisticated popcorn with a western touch. Too Haute Cowgirls popcorn breaks from typical butter and caramel flavors. Freshly popped kernels are generously coated in unconventional ingredients like homemade peanut brittle, pretzels and trail mix.

Armed with culinary degrees, these cowgirls are not afraid to experiment with new flavors. Whether you prefer sweet or salty, or just plain witty, there is a flavor for you. The Good the Bad and the Peanut Butter, End of the Trail Mix and Mutton Bustin’ Milk Chocolate are among customer favorites. Rest assured, these gourmet flavors have passed the ultimate taste test. “Deanna doesn’t like sweets, which means I get to be the taste tester,” Tarrant said. “She will try hundreds of versions until she finds the one that sticks. She is relentless when it comes to perfecting the popcorn.”

*Available in Denver at The Cheese Co., Marczyk Fine Foods and The Tattered Cover, in Edwards at Kitchen Collage and in Estes Park at Life’s Bear Necessities.



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