

WHAT'S NEW AT THIS YEAR'S NATURAL PRODUCTS EXPO WEST

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CONVENTIONAL WISDOM WATCH

"You had me at hello." Always steady, never wavering in its mission to champion the well being of the consumer, the Natural Foods Industry continues to inspire and incite passionate activism for doing the right thing.

Born out of the hippie counter-culture movement of the sixties, the Natural Foods Industry has come full circle. It's been said, "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win." With over 77,000 attendees and all major food companies present, it looks like the Natural Foods Industry is up to winning.







PLANT-BASED EATING

Plant-based eating is NOT about being vegan. Vegans follow their own diet rules, and veganism is one of many approaches that encompass plant-based eating. I'm a flexitarian; my neighbor is a vegetarian; I have a few friends in Marin who still follow the Ornish diet; another friend follows the Mediterranean diet; my masseuse follows a macrobiotic diet; and my twenty-three-year-old niece told me that she is progressively moving toward a more plant-based diet because she is concerned about the survival of the planet! Plant-based eating cuts across all ages, ethnicities, and genders. It is not defined by what it excludes, but by what it includes—lots of plant-based foods!

It may have been eco-conscious foodies and Michael Pollan's simple credo that launched this ship, but it has gone way beyond a trend and evolved into the philosophy/lifestyle of the future. We are all moving towards plant-based diets whether we are transitioning willingly or not. The ultimate pursuits of having clean water and clean air are driving us in this direction. And if you think it's going to be a while before this point tips, think again.

A major piece of good news in all of this is that the plant-based lifestyle is teaching us to eat vegetables and to enjoy them. USDA suggests that potatoes, tomatoes and lettuce (translation: French fries and burgers) comprise 60% of U.S. veggie consumption. It's no wonder that consumers don't eat vegetables—not only do they not know how to cook them, they don't know what they are! The tendency in America is to eat in restaurants what we don't eat at home. Restaurants have always been leaders in fashionable eating, and no surprise: "root-to-stem" dining is the herbivore's answer to the "nose-to-tail" movement. In major cities such as San Francisco, New York and Chicago, meat is being pushed off the center of the plate and listed under side dishes. The typical umami, smoky, savory flavors that we love about meat are now being used to make amazing vegetable dishes that are stunning to look at, delicious to eat, and totally satisfying with a glass of wine.

Vegetarian restaurants used to be associated with cheap college food. This is no longer the case. Seabirds Kitchen in Costa Mesa, California, has evolved from a food truck to a sit-down casual vegan restaurant. Seabirds is on a mission to push the boundaries of vegan cuisine using seasonal produce, unique flavor combinations, and culinary techniques to elevate plant-based food beyond the current standard. The night I ate there, the food was good (not great), but I get it. And as restaurants go, so will consumer product goods.

Expo was brimming with plant-based products. Here are a few of my favorites:





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BEN & JERRY'S VEGAN NON-DAIRY DESSERT

www.benjerry.com

Ben & Jerry's is a legacy brand that has managed to stay relevant. Last year they announced that they were in the process of developing non-dairy ice cream for the first time ever. And no, we're not talking about sorbet. B&J wanted to create something that tastes and feels just as creamy and delicious as their regular product, minus the lactose. Frankly, I expected the new products to be just okay, but they actually taste like regular Ben & Jerry's! Available in four popular B&J flavors: *Chocolate Fudge Brownie, Chunky Monkey, Coffee Caramel Fudge*, and *P.B. & Cookies*. All four are certified vegan and are in stores nationwide.

KITE HILL

www.kite-hill.com

Companies like Kite Hill have been replacing traditional dairy one product at a time. Kite Hill employs time-honored techniques to make a range of artisanal non-dairy products—cheese, cream cheese, yogurt, cheesecake—oh my! Their soft fresh and soft ripened cheeses are best-in-class and their cream cheese style spreads are a more than an acceptable substitute for traditional dairy spreads. No longer the poor relative, these plant-based cheeses can hold their heads up high on the cheeseboard.





DAIYA FOODS

www.daiyafoods.com

Daiya is the leading non-dairy cheese brand in retail channels. Their original product lineup has been consistently improving over the years, in both performance and taste. Their new lineup of creamy dressings fills a big gap in the category. I'm not a fan of their pizzas (the mozzarella style cheese tastes too much like mayo), but their cheese style slices are really tasty.

Grilled cheese sandwiches are an iconic American sandwich and have been satisfying young and old since the 1920s. In recent years, the sandwich has been taken for a culinary spin and paid homage every April with National Grilled Cheese Month. Some three-quarters of people who buy sliced cheese make at least one grilled cheese a month. What about dairy sensitive consumers? Daiya totally fills the bill. Cheese style slices are available in *Cheddar Style, Provolone Style* and *Swiss Style*.



BRAMI SNACKING LUPINI BEANS

www.bramibeans.com

I was familiar with lupin flour, but had never seen or heard of lupini beans before I tried these new Brami snacking beans. Lupini beans—also called lupin—were prolific in ancient Roman diets and in the countries of the Mediterranean region. They are traditionally eaten as a pickled snack food and are popular in Italy at Christmas served as a snack and/or antipasto. Today, because of the intense labor process required to soak and detoxify the bitter beans (they must be soaked overnight, cooked, and then rinsed several times a day for five to six days!), lupini beans are commonly sold brined in a jar like olives and pickles.

Like all legumes, lupini beans are a good source of protein and dietary fiber, but nutritionally are in a league of their own. They have a full range of amino acids. They can be grown in temperate climates, so consequentially are fast becoming an alternative crop to soy.

Brami has taken a beloved supersnack in the Mediterranean and re-envisioned it for modern American snacking. The beans are cooked, lightly pickled and seasoned and vacuum-packaged for a delicious, fresh, ready-to-eat plant-based protein snack. They're fun and addictive like edamame, but even more so. Their lower fat content makes their texture more appealing than edamame.

A word of caution: lupin is not required to be listed as an allergen, so some individuals who are allergic to peanuts will also be allergic to lupin. Available in *Sea Salt, Garlic & Herb, Chili Lime* and *Hot Pepper*.





LOVE BEETS

www.lovebeets.com

Love Beets is a beet-focused company, started by a husband and wife team, Guy and Katherine Shropshire. The Shropshire family, known for growing salad vegetables in England, purchased a small beet factory with the hopes of sharing a family favorite with others. They especially wanted to attract younger people to beets, so they experimented with unique marinated beet recipes and ultimately brought their marinated baby beets to New York's Fancy Food Show in 2010, where the response was overwhelmingly positive.

Love Beets serves up premium ready-to-eat fresh beets, just the way we like them—no mess, no fuss! And while beets are not typically listed along side superfoods like chia and quinoa, beets in their whole form contain a variety of unique health-boosting nutrients that you may not be getting elsewhere.

Since its launch, Love Beets has expanded their marinated beet line-up to include cooked beats, beet bars, beet juice and "un-beet-able innovations" like their new *Smoky-BBQ Shredded Beets*. What's not to love?



DANG ONION CHIPS

www.dangfoods.com

You probably know Dang's toasted coconut chips, but if you don't know their new crispy caramelized onion chips, let me introduce you. These delicious chips are made from real onions with no breading or corn. The onions are processed using vacuum frying, which allows the onions to be fried at a lower temperature, resulting in a fluffier crispy chip that's not heavy with oil.

Onions are the third most consumed fresh vegetable but with virtually no value added. Dang has contemporized the fresh onion with 2016 consumer values of high culinary, ready-to-use convenience. Now you can have the taste of caramelized onions anytime you want it—anywhere you want to use it.

Ready to enjoy as a snack or a condiment for salads, soups, and sandwiches in four varieties: *Sea Salt, Salt & Pepper, Chipotle Garlic* and *Applewood BBQ*. DANG!





MORINAGA MAKE-YOUR-OWN TOFU KIT

www.morinu.com/en/make-your-own-silken-tofu-momen-tofu-version/

Why make tofu yourself? Because you want to experience it at its peak—freshly made, creamy and subtly sweet. At least that's the opinion of Andrea Nguyen, author of *Asian Tofu: Discover the Best, Make Your Own, and Cook It at Home.*

Hard to believe, but as recently as 1986, tofu was declared America's most loathed food. Today, tofu is widely accepted and commonplace at restaurants and supermarkets where there's an array of tofu to choose from—Soft, Silky, Firm, and Super Firm.

But firmness levels are like dress sizes. "There's no standard," Nguyen says. "You have to keep trying until you find a brand you like." Morinaga sampled a super-smooth decadent tofu crème bruleé. What they had done was make plain cups of silken tofu from their soy milk and a coagulant, traditional nigari (mostly magnesium chloride), and topped it off with maple syrup. Awwwww. I begged for a sample of their *Make-Your-Own Tofu* kit, which is in my refrigerator right now waiting to be used.





FOOD ACTIVISM

There are very few cities that have more restaurant seats than people. My hometown, San Francisco, is one of them. I don't think there is any place more obsessed with food. It's food talk, any time and all the time, and food activism looms large over the Bay Area in the form of farmers' markets, food co-operatives, Community-Supported Agriculture, the fair trade movement, community gardens, and natural food stores. Each of these alternative food sources is a catalyst to social change that's spreading quickly across the country, challenging the status quo of our agro-industrial food system.

Mission-based start-ups are raising awareness by highlighting issues of health, sustainable food supply, comprehensive food labeling, food access, food waste, genetically engineered food, local sources of food, soil management, agriculture's role in climate change, and other issues related to food policy.

Dan Barber is a chef and co-owner of Blue Hill in Manhattan and Blue Hill at Stone Barns in Pocantico, New York. His Blue Hill Yogurts were the first savory yogurts to enter the market, and they continue to do well. Dan writes prolifically on the local food movement and on topics that raise consciousness about the planetary effects of our everyday food choices. Dan makes my Top Ten list of people I admire the most in the food industry. His extraordinary vision for a new future of American eating is displayed throughout his book *The Third Plate*. He claims that traditionally, Americans have dined on the "first plate," a classic meal centered on meat with few vegetables. Now, thanks in part to the farm-to-table movement, many people have begun eating from the "second plate," the new ideal of organic, grass-fed meats and local vegetables. But neither model, Barber explains, supports the long-term productivity of the land. Instead, he calls for a "third plate"—a new pattern of eating based on cooking with, and celebrating, the whole farm—an integrated system of vegetable, grain, and livestock production.





IN ADDITION TO CELEBRATING THE WHOLE FARM, THERE'S THE ISSUE OF RESPECT FOR THE LAND.

George Monbiot, a British writer known for his environmental and political activism, says, "We're treating soil like dirt. It's a fatal mistake, as our lives depend on it." Monbiot stresses the urgency of this issue by highlighting global soil destruction and citing the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organization prediction that we will be able to grow crops for only sixty more years unless we turn this ship around.

Iowa State University has been conducting long-term agro-ecological research since 1998. Their program is one of the longest-running comparisons of organic and conventional farming in the country. They have learned that over fourteen years of experimentation, yields of organic crops have been equivalent to or greater than their conventional counterparts, the profits are higher, costs are lower, and there is higher carbon sequestration in an organic, no-till system.

As with any social issue, it's complicated. The vast majority of our planet is ocean, which serves as a main sink for soaking up much of the heat trapped by greenhouse gas emission. This is the main reason we have not felt the full effects of carbon overindulgence. But now we see signs that the oceans are starting to release some of that pent-up thermal energy due to overload. When we lose oceans, we lose a livable planet. National Geographic has been reporting on the perils of climate change for a long time; they have projected that by 2046 there will not be one fish left in the ocean. *Whaaaaat*? No crops, no fish, in *how* many years?

Clearly, agriculture MUST be part of the solution. While consumers are busy talking about how much water it takes to produce a gallon of something, this industry has been talking about Regenerative Agriculture for some time. Finally, this issue is getting some well-deserved attention in the media, and among newer mission-based companies. The results of carbon sequestration studies don't always lend themselves easily to generalization, due to variations in soil and farm management methods. However, enough with "Show me the science!" We understand sequestration well enough to know that intense rotational grazing and native ecosystems are the only systems that sink carbon. Soil health has become the new cause célèbre. Who knew that grass could be our salvation? (Prairie grass, that is!)





THANK A FARMER

Millennials are being called to the land just like their hippie parents were in the 1960s. The landscape of American farming is changing, and so is the average farmer. Look around your local farmers' market. How many graybeards do you see? I see lots of hipsters with tattoos and piercings who are environmentally aware, who treat soil as a living organism. Today's Agripreneurs are largely urban youth who have moved back to the country.

Financially, farming is a risky business, but there are changes that are making it more economically viable, especially for small farmers. The most productive farms are still large corporate farms. But in an era that values personal integrity and involvement, consumers are starting to demand food with better quality and greater integrity. There is a reevaluation going on, of the value of farming and of the contributions that farmers make to our society.

Again, we've seen restaurants take the lead here in denoting the name of the farm on their menus. Agricola in Princeton, New Jersey, is a self-described community eatery. In Latin, "Agricola" means "farmer"—the restaurant's name embodies their farm-to-table spirit and their dedication to the community. Their *"THANK A FARMER"* sign pays tribute to their own Great Road Farm and neighboring providers. Plan to see more packaged goods act like restaurants in the future.

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

"If it can't be reduced, reused, repaired, rebuilt, refurbished, refinished, resold, recycled or composted, then it should be restricted, redesigned or removed from production."

- Pete Seeger -

Tristram Stuart is a food waste rebel. His book *Waste, Uncovering the Global Food Scandal,* a national best seller, shines a light on another key issue in our food system—food waste. Stuart came to his self-proclaimed hobby by way of feeding his pet pigs. When he went to local supermarkets and bakeries to ask for food they were throwing away, instead of finding "garbage," he found good, fresh food. In his quest to tackle food waste, Stuart discovered that the richer the country, the more surplus food was being discarded. According to Stuart, America has four times the food it needs to feed the population; up to 40% of the good, safe food produced in America never makes it to people's plates.

Instead of continuing to believe that we need to increase our global food production to feed the planet, we are undergoing a course correction focusing on what we can be saving. The next movement may be "garbage to plate." Late last year, Dan Barber's Blue Hill restaurant in Manhattan went through an eco-makeover of sorts. For three weeks, Barber launched WastED, a pop-up restaurant showcasing how good food could be created from ingredients we normally toss out. On the menu was a "burger" made from leftover pulp from a cold-pressed juice shop and garnished with pickled cucumber butts, a meatloaf called "dog food" made from animal organs and fried skate wing cartilage. (I'm pretty sure this constitutes Michelin star waste, in the hands of such a chef genius.) Barber's WastED was intended to kick-start a larger conversation about our entire food system. Barber maintains that if you're thinking about a problem that you can solve in your lifetime, you're thinking too small.

Here are some of my favorites:





SIR KENSINGTON'S FABANAISE

www.sirkensingtons.com

Sir Kensington's is an extraordinary tale of a fascinating British character from days of yore, and two Brown University students who stumble upon forgotten spice chronicles in the library's special collections, revive the rare and exceptional ketchup recipe, and build a multi-million dollar condiment business.

I first met the founders, Mark Ramadan and Scott Norton, when they launched their line of awesome ketchup. Nobody said it, but everybody thought it—why mess with ketchup? Surely, that won't get you very far. Okay, everybody was wrong. Sir Kensington's aims for a niche in the condiment market, a *huge* category, that's very ripe for disruption. Mayonnaise is now the most popular condiment in the U.S. with retail sales of \$2 billion. Sir Kensington's debuted a classic mayonnaise in 2013 that's as awesome as their ketchup. Since then, they've added an organic version, a version made with avocado oil and most recently, Fabanaise, an vegan mayonnaise made with bean water.

Instead of plant protein powder that's used in Hampton Creek's Just Mayo, Fabanaise is made with aquafaba, the water leftover from cooking chickpeas (even water from packaged tofu and peas is aquafaba). Aquafaba is the perfect egg replacer. It whips up, looks, and performs so much like egg whites, it may change egg-based cooking forever (I think I see a frothy Pisco Sour in my future).

Sir Kensington's, which is based in New York, teamed up with local hummus producer, Ithaca, to get the water leftover from cooking its chickpeas, a byproduct that's normally thrown away. Available in *Classic* and *Chipotle* varieties.



FORAGER PROJECT ORGANIC VEGETABLE CHIPS

www.foragerproject.com

Forager is "a way to eat." Their juices use the whole vegetable and let nothing go to waste—an expression of the brand's commitment to provide healthy and sustainable products. Their new Organic Vegetable Chips are made using fresh-pressed vegetables, ancient and sprouted grains, and a touch of sea salt. They have a distinct vegetal flavor and satisfying crunch.

Forager Vegetable Chips are 100% organic, non-GMO, gluten-free, kosher, vegan, corn-free and contain no trans fats. (Hey, maybe Forager could team up with Dan Barber and commercialize the WastED Burger. That would be cool!) Forager Vegetable Chips are available in *Greens, Roots* and *Beets* varieties.





SALUTE SANTÉ! GRAPESEED FLOUR

www.grapeseedoil.com

Did you know that for every two bottles of wine made there is one bottle of grape waste produced? The waste includes things like seeds, stems, and grape skins, all of which are loaded with nutrients. But where does all this good stuff go? Some wineries have a rigorous composting program, but most just throw it away.

Valentin Humer, an Austrian born, European-trained chef, came to the U.S. after working more than a decade with some of Europe's finest restaurants and their secret ingredient: grapeseed oil. At the time, grapeseed oil was not available in the U.S., so Humer decided to turn garbage into a business by creating a new industry adjacent to the existing wine industry. Located in Napa Valley, Humer encourages local wineries to take advantage of grapeseed oil by importing presses or by delivering seeds to him to press. With his wife, Nanette, they have built an award-winning grapeseed cooking oil business that reaches worldwide.

Now there's a whole other product coming out of the oil-making process that has bakers in the Napa Valley excited: grapeseed flour. The grapeseed flour is packed with rich antioxidants, calcium, potassium, and it's high in dietary fiber. It adds a nuttiness and crisp texture to favorite baking recipes.



EPIC ANIMAL OILS

www.epicbar.com

EPIC created the first 100% grass-fed meat, fruit and nut bar. The product was called EPIC because it improves the lives of animals, regenerates our bodies, and helps heal the land. Sounds pretty epic.

The EPIC meat bar was not the first meat bar of its kind—Tanka Bar was—but it was the first to focus on acquiring meat from animals that were grass-fed and pasture-raised, then packaged with flavor combinations that hadn't been seen. If you're wondering why this was a big deal, go buy a free-range chicken and a pasture-raised chicken (no cheating), cook them up, and taste the difference.

EPIC was sold to General Mills just two short years after the company was founded. Some called this a "sell-out," but I agree with Taylor Collins, the founder of EPIC, that if you really believe in the ideas underpinning Ancestral health and regenerative agriculture, and if you want these ideas to actually matter and affect change on a global scale, something, somewhere, sometime has to "get big."

EPIC is putting its money where its mouth is and launched *The Whole Animal Project*, a new initiative that goes above and beyond producing healthy snack foods. Through this initiative, EPIC hopes to continue moving towards purchasing entire animals and creating economic incentives for ranchers to raise their animals on pasture. Their new *Grass Fed Beef Tallow, Berkshire Pork Lard*, and *Cage-Free Duck Fat* are all time tested by great-great-great grandparents and bringing animal fats back into the kitchen where they belong.

Now that's epic!





MATTSON

BUGS, BUGS, BUGS

Our bodies are made up of trillions of microorganisms. These microbes not only make up 90% of us, they are essential to our health. Probiotics are growing in popularity in the U.S. in both food and supplements, as an increasing number of people realize that the gut flora have enormous influence over our immune system. The largest number of microbes is found in our gut, and more are found on the skin. Mother Dirt launched a new line of skin biome-friendly products that restores good bacteria to the skin, scalp, or wherever else you apply the mist. It appears that in addition to our lack of good bacteria in our guts, we also have insufficient good bacteria on our skin. Our modern lifestyle and our fear of germs have pretty much derailed this biome as well.

I was recently drawn to the article *Sauerkraut Could Be the Secret to Curing Social Anxiety*. We know that the microbes in fermented foods can improve the health of our gut, but can they improve our neurological functions? A 2015 study published in *Psychiatry Research* chronicles how 700 undergraduates were asked about their consumption of fermented foods and assessed for personality traits and social anxiety. The authors found that eating fermented foods was correlated with decreased social anxiety. It appears that our gut acts as a second brain. More research is needed to understand the exact relationship between the intestines and the brain, but these studies highlight the importance of maintaining high levels of beneficial bacteria in our digestive tract. In fact, gut flora may control our entire metabolism.

For centuries, our ancestors consumed a variety of probiotics daily in the foods they ate—bread, beer, cheese, wine, vinegar, soy sauce, pickles, sauerkraut, kimchi, miso, kombucha, yogurt, chocolate, and many other traditional foods and drinks created through fermentation. Because of our contemporary industrial model, today's versions of these traditional foods are tasty, but they no longer nourish us in the same way. Simply put, pickles that are pasteurized and packed in salt and vinegar are a far cry from our grandmother's natural lactic acid fermented half sours.

Fermented foods are full of probiotics, and thus are the ultimate SUPERFOOD. Many products today claim to be probiotic, but do they deliver as promised? We're most familiar with yogurts and dairy products, but now there are cereals, ice cream, granolas, chocolate, and cookies that claim to benefit our gut. I'm skeptical of some of these claims, because sugar harms gut flora. In 2008, Dannon was outed by the FTC for exaggerating probiotic health benefits for their Activia and DanActive dairy drinks. In 2010, Dannon settled, and three years later, the FDA allowed them to make softer claims. It takes a village to achieve gut health. That means eating and drinking a wide variety of probiotic-fermented foods that are not loaded with sugar.

Here are some of my favorite products:





MOTHER DIRT AO+ MIST

www.motherdirt.com

Just like our gut relies on good bacteria and probiotics, our skin relies on good bacteria to help us be healthy as well. This elaborate ecosystem is called the skin biome. Humans evolved with bacteria on their skin that they came into contact with through the soil.

According to the founders of Mother Dirt, every morning when we use a soap or shampoo, all this chemistry has a dramatic effect in disrupting the skin biome by killing the healthy bacteria. So, what is it? Mother Dirt is the first line of products developed to nurture the good bacteria of your skin. The core technology is based around a bacteria found in nature. The AO+ Mist is a living product that replenishes the good bacteria lost with modern lifestyles and hygiene. The patented formula contains live Ammonia Oxidizing Bacteria (AOB) that work by consuming irritating components in sweat and converting them into beneficial ingredients for the skin. This action helps to rebalance the skin biome to a healthier state. The shampoo and cleanser are supporting products in the line, formulated to be friendly to the AOB and the other good bacteria of your the skin.

Mother Dirt wants us all to rethink what clean means. For a long time, clean meant sterile, and what we are learning is sterile is not healthy.

FARMHOUSE CULTURE GUT SHOT

www.farmhouseculture.com

What's a Gut Shot you ask? The answer: a drink with gut enhancing probiotic properties. Gut shots come in all shapes and varieties. There are juice shots, probiotic dairy and grain-based shots, organic grass-fed probiotic dairy shots, and probiotic vegetable shots.

Farmhouse Culture is a relatively young company that makes a line of raw, organic, sauerkraut in punchy flavors—the kind of live, fermented sauerkraut that tastes almost effervescent. Their new gut shot seems like a natural, and it is! It's the cloudy juice left from the fermentation process of their sauerkraut and kimchi. If Koreans have been drinking kimchi juice for a long time, why should we let all those good bacteria go down the drain?





HEALTH-ADE KOMBUCHA

www.health-ade.com

All kombuchas are fermented black tea concoctions, but these brews vary drastically, and the ones with the most sugar often taste the least appealing. As consumers drink less cola, they are turning to healthier drinks like kombucha. No longer niche, kombucha has tipped and is big business.

Kevita may be the best selling kombucha in Whole Foods, but if I had to take one kombucha with me to a desert island, this raw brew would be it! Daina Trout, the founder of Health-Ade, had been brewing kombucha tea at home for a decade when it dawned on her that this was the right product she and her husband Justin, and best friend Vanessa, wanted to launch.

Health-Ade is hand crafted the "old-fashioned way" and in super-small batches (2.5 gallons!) which allows for premium control over quality. Non-GMO project verified, and certified organic, kosher, vegan, and gluten-free, Health-Ade heavily supports the "real food" movement in their local communities, and is actively expanding their reach to become a valuable national brand.





EDIBLE INSECTS

Insect-eating is practiced regularly by roughly two billion people worldwide. No longer considered peasant food, scorpions, grasshoppers, mealworms and crickets grace the menus of today's upscale restaurants across Europe and in a handful of restaurants in the United States. Bug gastronomy aside, it's going take some convincing for Americans to embrace bug dining anytime soon. However, you don't need to eat "actual" insects to derive the benefits of this food source. There are many emerging possibilities—consider the famous sweet mayonnaise using bee larvae instead of eggs, compliments of Chef René Redzepi, and EntoCube, a leading supplier of cricket flour and other offerings of cookies, muffins and bars. Bitty Foods, with the help of culinary director Tyler Florence (the one and only Food Network Star Chef and founder of Sprout Organic Baby Food), hit a grand slam with their line of cricket flour products.

I can name forty reasons to eat insects, but the main reason is sustainable PROTEIN! Our climate calamity has affected the entire planet. With resources like arable land and fresh water growing increasingly scarce, there is urgent need for more efficient food sources. Right now, people eat insects because they *want* to eat insects. In the future, people will eat insects because they *need* to eat insects. Whether or not we reach the predicted nine billion population, eating insects is a creative way to meet the challenge of food security.

A number of startups are developing small-scale insect farming methods, but no one has yet found a way to farm insects on a large scale. It's simply a matter of time.

Here are some of my favorite products:







BITTY FOODS CHIRIDOS

www.bittyfoods.com

These air-puffed, spicy snack chips are surprisingly good. Made from a combination of lentil and cricket flour, their crispy texture is a perfect reflection of what everyone says they love about eating exoskeleton. Bitty also makes cookies from their all-purpose baking flour. Good for the planet, and good for your body, in three satisfying flavors: *Baja Ranchero, Salsa Verde* and *Spicy Mole*. (That last one is not the small mammal—it's the spicy Mexican chocolate-flavored sauce!)

EXO CRICKET FLOUR BARS

www.exoprotein.com

This Brooklyn-based startup recently closed a \$4 million Series A funding to bring chef-created cricket flour to the masses. EXO, which sells bars online and at Whole Foods and Wegman's, plans to use the money to boost their retail business and fill their innovation pipeline. Their long-term vision is to make cricket powder competitive with soy, whey, and other protein sources. EXO freezes their crickets (this instantaneously puts them to sleep), then dehydrates the bugs in a multi-step process that results in a neutral-tasting powder that is used as the bar's protein ingredient. These bars may be an acquired taste for some, but they're worth a try.





FAT IS BACK

The new supermarket motto appears to be "more fat." Consumers are clamoring for full-fat products, and espousing the benefits of eating more fat. If you've ever wondered how we arrived at this juncture of rebellion, here's a short recap.

Our fear of saturated fat began in the 1950s, when Ancel Keys, a pathologist at the University of Minnesota with a talent for persuasion, convinced public health experts that saturated fat was responsible for the growing incidence of heart disease. The American Heart Association adopted his view in the 1960s, followed by the U.S. government in 1977, and then the world. Despite flawed studies and push-back from several British scientists, Keys prevailed in defending his saturated fat hypothesis. The nutrition community of that time completely accepted the hypothesis, and encouraged the public to cut out butter, red meat, animal fats, eggs, dairy, and other "artery clogging" fats from their diets—a radical change at the time that is still very much in vogue today. What came next were a series of flawed research studies and a significant reduction in the saturated fat content of the U.S. recommended diet, replaced by grains, rice, pasta and potatoes. But as people reduced their intake of animal fat and cholesterol, the incidence of many serious diseases increased. Now two-thirds of Americans are overweight, and childhood obesity has tripled over the past thirty years.





Another critical factor has been consumers taking the USDA dietary guidelines literally. The USDA, promoting its original "food pyramid," instructed us to make grains the cornerstone of our diet. As it turned out, those grains broke down into sugar in the body, and promoted fat accumulation and insulin resistance. Every five years the government changes the guidelines, and we're finally seeing some improvements that might work to put us back on the path to better health. While the USDA is being applauded for recommending the reduction of sodium and sugar consumption levels and putting a positive spin on eggs and good fats, we shouldn't forget that the USDA is still heavily influenced by the agriculture industry, and has proven to be lethargic in adopting science that serves the people instead of the corporations.

I take issue with this approach to good and bad fats. Better to distinguish between natural and artificial fats. The only bad fat is (artificial) trans fat. The FDA has set a 2018 deadline for food companies to eliminate trans fats from their products. And while the FDA ruling is estimated to save \$140 billion in healthcare costs over the next twenty years, many iconic products will never taste the same. I feel for Twinkie lovers. Dr. Mark Hyman is a familiar face on PBS and the Director of the Cleveland Clinic Center for Functional Medicine. He is also a regular medical contributor to several well-known television programs and newspapers. Dr. Hyman is a nine-time #1 *New York Times* best-selling author and I'm betting his new book, *Eat Fat, Get Thin* will be another best seller.

In his book, he separates "fat from fiction" by busting current myths about fat. Dr. Hyman stresses that eating lots of the right (natural) fats will reduce waist size, increase metabolism, stimulate fat burning, cut hunger, optimize cholesterol profile, and possibly even reverse type 2 diabetes and reduce the risk for heart disease. He also says the biggest problem is "sweet fat"—starch, sugar and fat together, such as in doughnuts, French fries and ice cream. The combination of fat and sugar messes with insulin and cholesterol levels, causing inflammation that can lead to chronic disease. Of course, knowing what you should and shouldn't eat is one thing; actually eating the right foods on a regular basis is quite another.

Here are some of my big fat favorites:





NOOSA YOGHURT

www.noosayoghurt.com

This may surprise you, but Noosa has never made any yoghurt other than full fat. Launched about six years ago during a period when it looked like yogurt would be all Greek, all the time, Noosa slipped under the radar of Chobani, Dannon and Yoplait. Koel Thomae, Noosa's founder, is a native of Australia, where we know live happy cows. Thomae teamed up with a fourth-generation Colorado dairy farmer who had a serious passion for producing quality milk, to create an Australian-style line of full fat yoghurt (I think this implies really good) based on a product she had tasted back in Australia. So goes the story of Chez Panisse and many other amazing products where the founder had tasted food or drink somewhere and missed it so much, they recreated it.

I love Noosa's contemporary flavors, and I find that a little bit is very satisfying. The lesson here: in today's consumer environment, quality is opportunity. Just sayin'...



KETTLE BRAND POTATO CHIPS COOKED IN 100% AVOCADO OIL

www.kettlebrand.com

Potato chips, the most popular snack in the U.S., constitute 40% of snack food consumption despite the fact that hardly anyone thinks potato chips are healthy. Most potato chips are fried in refined omega-6 vegetable oils that dramatically increase inflammation in the body.

Like olive oil, avocado oil is one of the few vegetable oils not derived from seeds. It is pressed from the fleshy pulp surrounding the avocado pit and is relatively low in omega-6 polyunsaturated fats. That's great, but do these chips taste good? Oh, yeah! Avocado oil imparts a light buttery flavor to the chip, and while other brands may have beaten Kettle to the market with healthy-oil-fried chips, no one beats Kettle on taste. Their three new flavors with culinary salts are delicious: *Chili Lime with Citrus Infused Sea Salt, Hawaiian Barbeque with Ginger Infused Sea Salt,* and *Himalayan Salt.*







JACKSON'S HONEST POTATO CHIPS COOKED IN 100% COCONUT OIL

www.jacksonshonest.com

The founders of Jackson's Honest initially set out to make a healthy snack for their kids; but when their son, Jackson, developed a neurological dysfunction, they saw how certain foods aggravated his digestion and made his condition worse. They leaned on diet to help him, and discovered how healthy fats made a positive difference, so they decided to use coconut oil to make their chips.

Coconut oil is a traditional fat used for thousands of years. It's stable when you cook with it, and it tastes great. Around 50% of the fat is lauric acid, which converts to monolaurin, a monoglyceride that can actually destroy viruses. Additionally, the medium chain fatty acids (MCFA) are easily digested and readily cross cell membranes. Best benefit yet—the MCFAs are immediately converted to energy rather than being stored as fat. Available in both potato and tortilla chips.

GOOD CULTURE COTTAGE CHEESE

www.goodculture.com

Cottage cheese has long been a part of a healthy diet plan, and it has often appeared as an ingredient in low-fat recipes. Now cottage cheese is finally getting the attention it deserves, as a high-protein cultured food, thanks in part to curd-loving cheese crafters like Good Culture.

Good Culture sells an artisanal-style, full-fat cottage cheese, in savory and sweet flavors. It takes a lot of skill to make cheese, and cottage cheese is no exception. General Mills' VC Arm must be betting these guys are on the right track, because they've recently closed on a \$2.1 million investment in Good Culture.





WHOLLY GUACAMOLE MINIS

www.eatwholly.com

Avocados are highly nutritious, and they contain all the right stuff. You may not know that avocados contain more potassium than bananas, are loaded with heart-healthy monounsaturated fat and fiber, and contain plenty of other important nutrients. What you do know is avocado's creamy, buttery taste is possibly the best taste in the world. Now this superfood comes in a convenient snack size cup that's perfect for times when one avocado is too much to eat or deal with. These adorable minis are currently available in *Classic, Chunky Avocado, Spicy, Spicy Homestyle* and *Verde* varieties.





CLEAN EATING

The latest buzz among health-conscious consumers is "eating clean." Clean eating dates back to the natural food movement of the 1960s, which shunned processed foods for the sake of ethical and societal values. Today's clean eaters set their own standards when it comes to which foods are "good" or "bad"—their rules far exceed those from the 1960s. There's no common definition of clean eating, but the term generally means a focus on nutrient-dense foods, and the absence of negatives such as sugar, salt and artificial ingredients. That is, if you are a mainstream consumer. If you are a natural food consumer, you are also sensitive to the environment and human and animal welfare. The Clean Eating Movement is a grassroots movement that calls for absolute transparency. These days, consumers are more educated and connected than ever before, and want to know what they are eating, where it was grown, who grew it, the existence of heavy metal concentrations, manufacturing techniques used, etc.

Monsanto has recently attempted a public relations makeover. Now Big Ag is doing the same thing, and is rebranding itself from Conventional Chemical Agriculture to Modern Agriculture. Really? Consumers know that what matters is substance, not what a thing is called. Some may not think that GMO labeling is an important issue, but millions of Americans do. Vermont is set to become the first state in the country to require labeling of genetically modified ingredients. The law requires manufacturers to label packaged foods produced using genetic engineering techniques, and stores must post a label on or near unpackaged geneticallyengineered produce or bulk food. Maine and Connecticut are poised to be the next states to require such labeling if other nearby states do so as well. Several large food companies, including General Mills, ConAgra, Mars, Campbell's Soup Co., and Kellogg have recently declared that they will print new national labels in compliance with Vermont's law. Todd Daloz, Vermont's assistant attorney general, recently said: "And it's heartening to see major manufacturers... choosing to put what from our view is a very simple factual disclosure on the label and with what appears to be not a tremendous amount of burden on them to put those four words on the label."

Little did we know when we unleashed our Industrial Agriculture model that chemicals would become the enemy of life. It appears now, that it may not matter how much money Big Chem spends to fight the Right to Know labeling propositions, as an increasing number of consumers believe that they have a right to know what's in their food.

ÖKO-Test is a German magazine started by journalists in 1985, the equivalent of Consumer Reports in the U.S. Recently the magazine tested a number of retailers and brands in Germany selling superfoods such as chia, moringa, gogi, raw cacao and hemp, and found evidence of contamination with mineral oil, heavy metals, and/or pesticides. The report speaks to a larger looming issue of global sourcing. Just because a food is a superfood, or has been decreed healthy, does not mean it's free of contaminants. The Non-GMO Project Verified is the fastest-growing label in the natural products industry, representing \$16 billion in annual sales and nearly 35,000 verified products. With consumers today, the Non-GMO Project seal is the most trusted sign that a product was made using the best practices for GMO avoidance. Hmmmm, I wonder what will become the most trusted sign for CLEAN?

Here are some of my favorites:





CUISINE SOLUTIONS

www.cuisinesolutions.com

Recognized by the world's top chefs, Cuisine Solutions is the authority on sous-vide (say "sue veed") cooking, the slow-cooking technique that they pioneered, perfected and popularized. Why cook sous-vide? The sous-vide method results in superb flavor and texture time after time, which are nearly impossible to achieve by traditional means.

Cuisine Solution has been making premium products for foodservice and retail for over forty years. Founded and run by perfectionist chefs who insist on the highest quality ingredients right from the start, their foods are naturally nutritious and wholesome, with no need for preservatives. And now their retail products are available online.



KITCHEN ACCOMPLICE BONE BROTH CONCENTRATES

www.kitchenaccomplice.com

More Than Gourmet is the world's leading producer of ready-to-use classic French sauces and stocks. Originally conceived and produced exclusively for five-star restaurants and gourmet institutions, these same products eventually became available to the home cook. For over twenty years, they have been producing their products in the same Old World tradition as defined by renowned Chef Master Auguste Escoffier, whose sauces were prepared by hand after hours of preparing ingredients, chopping and roasting bones, and carefully watching and skimming stockpots.

Do you know who purchases the most bones in the world? If you guessed More Than Gourmet, you'd be right! More Than Gourmet knows a lot about bones and broth. Their new Kitchen Accomplice culinary grade bone broth concentrates are the real deal. All you do is add to hot water, stir and enjoy! Available in *Chicken* and *Beef* varieties.







SIMPLY WEST COAST SEAFOOD SOUPS

www.simplywestcoast.com

Simply West Coast takes their responsibility to their customers and the food they make seriously. All of their products are gluten-free and they never use GMOs, nitrates, BHT or BHA. Their parent company is certified by Ocean Wise[™] to ensure fish stocks are sustainably sourced and preserved for future generations. Fresh, natural, sustainably sourced. Simply's seafood soups are delicious and made with wild, line-caught seafood from the cold, fresh waters of the Pacific Ocean. Available in four varieties: *Classic Seafood Chowder, Savoury Seafood Bisque, Sassy Seafood Curry* and *Kickin' Seafood Chili*.

Le GRAND

www.maisonlegrand.com

Eating doesn't get much cleaner than this. Bernard Le Grand, founder of Maison Le Grand, has so much respect for the food that he refers to their new plant as, "A state of the art food transformation beehive. It was built especially for us. We worked hard to honor our motto, 'Artisans of the Third Millennium'."

Their new line of hummus is fantastic and forward thinking in *Classik, Trailmix* and *Hemp* varieties. I especially loved their Trailmix variety made with seeds, nuts and wild rice.





COFFEE, TEA, AND WHAT?

Fifteen years ago at this show, tea was king and the only coffee to be found was in the lobby. Tea still reigns supreme, but coffee is trending, big time. The quality of coffee, along with the increasing importance of specialty coffee, is shaping the future. Technology is setting products apart with the ability to produce coffee drinks in very specific ways. And companies are brewing coffee with water from different sources for different taste effects. Combinations of coffee and tea are currently popular in Asia and thanks in large part to companies like Blue Bottle and creative baristas, caffeine fetishism is on the rise.

National restaurant chains are adding premium coffees to their menus, and tea sales are expected to double over the next five years. All of this is a natural offshoot of the craft movement where consumers seek authenticity and quality.

Matcha is still big news, and will probably be bigger next year. A young man in the Japanese Pavilion was kind enough to give me a refresher on how to make good matcha. Aside from starting with good matcha, all it takes to make a great cup of tea is 180° water and some quick wrist action. Kombucha, a popular fermented tea, is going mainstream as sour replaces sweet.

Water products abound from coconut to alkaline to plant-based waters like artichoke and asparagus. The majority of these waters are expensive and not worth the money, but there are a few products like Maple Water, typically made from pure maple sap, that can be helpful to people who work out for long stretches, so long as the beverage doesn't have added sugar.

Hydration isn't a trend—it's a necessity, and a remedy for countless diseases. The most common hidden cause of chronic illnesses in the Western world—from arthritis to asthma to ulcers, heart pain, MS, allergies and more—is dehydration. There is an epidemic of chronic dehydration in America, due to decades of consuming dehydrating beverages like sodas, coffee, tea, and sugary juices. When we don't drink our six to eight glasses of water a day, many physiological functions of the body are thrown off, resulting in pain and illness.

In his book *Your Body's Many Cries for Water*, the late Dr. F. Batmanghelidj offers insights and easy-to-understand scientific explanations on why water is vital to our well-being. Dr. Batmanghelidj explains: "When the tissue is dehydrated, it's changing structure. The plum-like cells become prune like." Our blood is 94% water, our brain is 85% water, and our soft tissue is 75% water. We are not just what we eat; we are what we drink.

Here are some of my favorite beverages:





BLUE BOTTLE COFFEE

www.bluebottlecoffee.com

Blue Bottle makes some of the best coffee on the planet. Their New Orleans Iced Coffee and new cold brew are exquisite, without the exquisite price tag. More than a decade ago, Blue Bottle crafted a version of chicory-infused coffee for their farmers' market stand. At Blue Bottle cafés, this drink is made to order, but last year the chain launched ready-to-drink versions in grab-and-go cartons. This fully organic, cold brewed, New Orleans-style chicory coffee includes cane sugar and Clover Organic Farms whole milk. The flavor is complex and sophisticated and lightly sweet, but be careful, it packs quite a caffeine punch!

Blue Bottle added another ready-made coffee to its lineup. Packaged in an eight-ounce contemporary squat can, the drink is brewed from the coffee brand's Three Africans dark roast blend and is available in individual cans or four packs.



CRIO BRU

www.criobru.com

Crio was founded in 2010 by an insightful entrepreneur who wanted to share his discovery of brewed cocoa beans as a healthy and delicious alternative to coffee.

The inspiration for this drink came thousands of years ago from the indigenous peoples of Central and South America. Brewed cocoa was served to kings, and was prized for its energizing and restorative properties. Named after the famed criollo cocoa beans, Crio's flagship product is Crio Bru, 100% roasted and ground cocoa beans that are brewed like coffee.

Crio launched a new single-serve K-Cup packaging to meet customer demand for its popular brewed cocoa beverage. The full line of Crio Bru flavors are roasted through a patent-pending process using cacao (cocoa) beans from Ecuador, Ghana, Dominican Republic, and Venezuela.





KOA NATURAL OLAKINO

www.drinkkoa.com

Is it water or juice? It looks like water but it's really sugar-free juice. Olakino, which the company says means in Hawaiian "the healthiest part of the fruit," is made from fresh-pressed pomegranates, bamboo, mint, lime, amla fruit, annatto, guava, holy basil, red sea lettuce, lemongrass, carrot, and lemons. But during a centrifuge filtration process, it turns clear, explains co-founder Adam Louras, and losses its sugar and calories on the way. Despite all the stuff it ditches, the process manages to preserve a lot of the nutrition.

The juice industry as a whole is estimated to be \$2.3 billion in annual revenue. In some cities, juice is really everywhere, and Los Angeles is said to be the land of a thousand juice bars. But there's been fallout recently and the industry's growing pains are beginning to show. The main issue beyond saturation is the high cost of raw juices and the sugar they deliver. Koa is the first company to create something like this, but a common result for individuals who need to change a lifestyle due to looming personal health risks. If you're wondering what it taste like, it tastes like good refreshing spa water. Available in three favors: *Natural, Raspberry* and *Lavender*.



LEMONCOCCO

www.drinklemoncocco.com

Lemoncocco is a new premium non-carbonated drink inspired by the distinctive lemon and coconut stands found along the cobblestoned streets of Rome. Jennifer Cue, CEO of Jones Soda Co, is married to an Italian from Rome. She discovered the beverage on one of her many visits there. To create an authentic version of this classic Roman drink, the company extracted the flavor of Sicilian lemons and added a splash of coconut cream. Cue explained "When I tasted the beverage for myself and saw the enthusiasm for this drink in Rome, I realized the potential of this unique beverage back home. Our version of Lemoncocco is less sweet than that found in Rome and to me is more on trend with evolving tastes of the North American palate. While this refreshing blend is a natural choice for patrons of Italian restaurants and specialty shops, it is a perfect pairing for any type of lunch or dinner. And since Lemoncocco makes an excellent mixer for cocktails, it is great for happy hour as well."

I want to express that I was blown away with this drink. It's really, really good.





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FINAL COMMENTS

THE FOOD 2.0 REVOLUTION

You are what you eat. Food is not simply sustenance; it defines who we are. Whole Foods at its inception may have ushered in a reformed philosophy of sourcing, quality control and education, but a new generation of stores and restaurants are taking the conversation to another level. We are no longer tethered to the old way of doing things, as groundbreaking technology gives us the opportunity to do things different. A wise person once told me, "Always have two ways of doing things—the same way and a new way."





Barbara Brueckner Shpizner is a professional food developer at Mattson the country's most experienced independent developer of new food and beverage products for the retail foods industry, as well as food service and restaurant chains. Barbara's career in the food industry spans 38 years, with the last 15 years focused in the natural, healthy and functional food channels. Barbara's expertise at Mattson includes innovating and developing products for some of the nation's largest companies along with many mid-size companies, startups and international food companies. After more than three decades, her vast knowledge of the food industry has given her a better understanding for how the food we eat contributes to our basic quality of life—from our health to our happiness.

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Mattson is North America's premier food and beverage design and development firm. We help companies fully realize their innovation potential with new concept development and optimization, prototype development, branding and package design, consumer research, and commercialization. We take clients from strategy to market readiness. We work for startups, mid-size companies, and billion+ multi-nationals, across all channels, technologies, and need states.

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Mattson's Booth - Natural Product Expo West 2016 SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!