

Meet and Eat

Baltimore area food bloggers Kathy Wielech Patterson and Neal Patterson tested out some new treats from the Fancy Food Show.

by Kathy Wielech Patterson and Neal Patterson

This summer, we attended the Fancy Food Show in New York to get a peek at the goodies hitting the shelves of local grocery and gourmet stores. A mind-boggling 180,000 products were on display at the booths of 2,400 exhibitors. It was both overwhelming and exhilarating, but we sallied forth and visited several hundred firms, sampling chocolates, ice creams, and even mezcal and tequila.

We found that Fisher's Popcorn, an Ocean City favorite since 1937, is making their delicious snack available in stores on the western side of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge as well as at their famous boardwalk shop. (Who doesn't come home from a trip Downey Oshun without a few tubs of the stuff stashed in the trunk?)

In addition to everyone's favorite caramel and white cheddar flavors, they're introducing a new version of caramel corn that incorporates the heat and smokiness of chipotle peppers. We've spotted bags of Fisher's Popcorn on the shelves of Whole Foods and, surprisingly, Ukazoo Books. Don't be surprised to see it "pop" up elsewhere, too.

Ice cream

A product you may have already seen is Graeter's ice cream. If you haven't tried it yet, please do. If you have, then you know that this stuff is killer. In a good way. This small-batch producer uses only top-notch ingredients, including fresh Oregon berries and quality dark chocolate.

The flavors with the word "chip"



Photo courtesy of Kathy Wielech Patterson

About the Authors

Kathy Wielech Patterson and Neal Patterson are food bloggers and the authors of "Food Lover's Guide to Baltimore" (Globe Pequot, 2013). For recipes, reviews, and info on their book, check out minxeats.com. They are currently working on their second book, "Baltimore Chef's Table."

on the label are our favorites, mostly because those "chips" are closer to "slabs." Rather than tossing in pre-cut pieces, Graeter's pours liquid chocolate into the churning ice cream. Later, they break it up all by hand, which results in deliciously uneven chunks and blobs of chocolate that have a pleasing chewy consistency.

Coconuts

Another frozen treat you might not

know about is Luna & Larry's Coconut Bliss. Not technically an ice cream since it contains no dairy, this vegan dessert is made with coconut milk. It comes in over a dozen flavors including chocolate peanut butter and ginger cookie caramel and is available at Wegman's, Whole Foods, and MOM's.

Coconut is one of the big things right now, not only the milk (which is made from the meat of the nut) but also the water. The liquid found at the center of young coconuts has been enjoyed as a beverage in Asia and South America forever.

It's refreshing and rehydrating and one of the first things we gulp after a busy day of walking around (like at the Fancy Food Show). Vita Coco, available at Giant, Safeway, and GNC, is just one brand of coconut water on the market (Zico and O.N.E. are two more). Vita Coco comes in six flavors but we think the lightly sweet 100% coconut flavor is the best.

Oil

Another product that impressed us was Hammons Black Walnut oil. Pressed from black walnuts, native to North America, this earthy-flavored oil is a nice change from the usual extra virgin olive oil bread dip, pasta drizzle, or vinaigrette. In Maryland, Hammons Black Walnut oil is available at Costco, Mars, and Wegman's.

Although we've only mentioned a few products here, fancy food items are popping up on grocery store shelves in ever greater numbers. Next time you are shopping, instead of picking up the same old things, why not peruse the aisles for products you've never tried before and experiment with them at home? You could end up with a whole new grocery list of go-to favorites.

Learn more about food in the area at baltimorefoodloversguide.com.