



Feast! LOCAL FOODS MARKETPLACE

FEED YOUR CURIOSITY

BY ELENA BYRNE

LOCAL
FOOD FESTIVAL
OFFERS RISK-FREE
WAY TO TRY
NEW FOODS



Imagine a grocery store where you could sample every item, savory to sweet, before deciding what to buy. That's exactly what you'll find at the Fifth Annual FEAST! Local Foods Marketplace (held Saturday, December 1, 10am-4pm at the Mayo Civic Center). The event features hundreds of artisan-made foods and beverages from all over the upper Midwest under one roof.

Been to FEAST! before? Then be sure to revisit favorites and check out this year's additions. For 2018, more than a dozen new exhibitors will showcase original products, everything from black garlic marinade to cold-press coffee to tasty popped lotus seed snacks (similar to popcorn). Here's a peek at three new vendors offering specialty flavors—a culinary journey of cultural traditions—all with the try-before-you-buy bonus.

ZEN FUSION

First stop? Dynamic Indian fusion food producer, Infuzn Foods (India + Fusion + Zen = Infuzn), featuring vegan, vegetarian and gluten-free versions of Indian favorites.

"When people think of Indian foods, they think of spicy," says Anantha Kollengode, one of Infuzn's three founders, "but people love the variety of flavor notes that come out in our dishes, and that the spice is not overpowering. We're not 100 percent authentic, but a fusion, a confluence, to bring the best of both worlds, to achieve the zen, the perfect harmony."

At FEAST!, Infuzn will be sampling things like three different chutneys, dried bean paneer, a tomato mint spread and a rutabaga spread, as well as their Indian roti breads with vegetable pulao, lemony noodles with an Asian influence, and smoothies with guava, mango, and other exotic fruits, all with a healthier twist.

"We take a traditional Indian recipe, maintain the essence of the food, and make it more healthy," explains Anantha. "We strive to be conscious of allergens that are problematic for some people, like gluten, nuts, and eggs. We price our foods to be reasonable and attainable. Our vision is customer-centric."

AZTEC GOLD

Another FEAST! newcomer is Ancient Energy Granola, an amaranth-based product rich in protein, minerals, antioxidants, and naturally gluten-free. A grain once worshiped by pre-Columbian Aztecs, amaranth has made a slow return to fame. Owner and Iowa entrepreneur Ashley Fahey encountered it on a trip to Mexico and became determined to

Feast! FACTS

WHAT: FEAST! Local Foods Marketplace

WHEN: Saturday, Dec. 1, 10am-4pm

WHERE: Mayo Civic Center

HOW MUCH: \$8 at the door

MORE INFO: local-feast.org

promote this powerhouse food. For Fahey, making her granola has been a labor of love, and she enjoys her customer's feedback.

"People like that it's not overly sweet and that they can add sweetener of their choice if they want," Fahey says. "The texture of the puffed amaranth is also nice. It's not hard, so kids can eat it easily. I was surprised when a 3-year-old wanted to try it, but liked it, and moms have been happy to buy it for their kids because it's healthy."

Ancient Energy is nutrient dense, with less sugar, more protein, and healthy fats. And it tastes great with FEAST! perennial favorite Country View Dairy yogurt.

SOULFUL SAUCE

Sharon Richards-Noel of West Indies Soul Food makes barbecue, hot pepper, and jerk sauces that are spicy and full of heart, soul, and Caribbean flavor.

"People love the sauce," she says. "The barbecue is my favorite because it's not as sweet as the other ones I've tasted. It has a kick to it."

All her sauces are great for dipping, basting, and marinating. The hot pepper also enhances soups and rice, and the barbecue or jerk works well in a crock pot.

She first served her specialties from a food truck—14 years running at the Minnesota State Fair—before she began bottling it three years ago. And now, when she's not serving kids in the high school kitchen where she works, she's busy getting her sauces onto store shelves. She's still amazed at how many people love it.

"About 80 percent of the kids at the school cafeteria want to try the hot sauce," she says, "but at the beginning they didn't even know what it was. I warn them it's hot and they're like, 'No, we can take it, we can take it.'"

Richards-Noel sees her sauces as a pathway to doing something for others: "The vision with the sauces was to start a nonprofit to help kids and young adults learn life skills, to lift themselves up."

The plan is slowly coming together. As sales progress, she aims to purchase a building and offer transitional housing to support young moms, helping young adults become strong and self-sustaining, just like her.

Whether it's your first trip to FEAST! (or your fifth), a day at the Marketplace is sure to feed your curiosity about local food. Tickets are available at the door for \$8. For more information, visit local-feast.org.

Elena Byrne is Tradeshow and Communications Coordinator for FEAST!, with a background in nutrition. She loves talking with food entrepreneurs and hearing about their passion.



Feast!
LOCAL FOODS
MARKETPLACE

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