

East Bay Express



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East Bay Food Epiphanies: Avocado Ice Cream and Wine-grape Soda

FOOD [Anneli Rufus](#) — Tue, Jan 26, 2010 at 12:01 PM

Last week at the Fancy Food Show in San Francisco, thousands of fascinating small food companies — and a few fascinating large ones — from all over the world displayed their products as the buyers for stores all over the world tasted samples and placed orders. For many companies in our current economic climate, this show was make-or-break time. Some East Bay favorites were on the scene, both selling and buying, and some amazing new products debuted — featuring formerly unknown edibles and/or cutting-edge technologies applied to traditional ingredients. Are yuzu juice, **roasted-tomato cassava chips**, **Belgian chocolate disks adorned with full-color photographs**, and agave-sweetened everything the wave of the future?

Buy local: Berkeley-based **Vignette Wine Country Soda** showed off its sumptuously subtle and faintly fizzy nonalcoholic drinks sweetened only with the juice of California wine grapes, including Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Rosé. Also based in Berkeley, the **Somersault Snack Company** makes health-minded crunchy snacks with sunflower seeds, whole-wheat flour, chicory root, cocoa powder, and sea salt. **Mr. Espresso**, a family-owned business that began in 1978 when electrical engineer Carlo Di Ruocco began selling Italian-made espresso machines out of his Alameda home, now also sells oakwood-roasted coffee. **Peerless Coffee & Tea**, an Oakland tradition for eighty-plus years, showcased grinds based on recipes over 75 years old. Specializing in Filipino treats, Pittsburg-based **Ramar Foods** maintains its own ice-cream plant — producing such flavors as halo halo, macapuno, cashew-langka, buko salad, avocado, and purple yam. Ramar's other product lines feature frozen lumpia, turon, ukoy, and embotido. Founded by Don and Susie Morris, **Donsuemor** introduced moist delicate madeleines to Berkeley in 1976; today their five varieties are flavored with chocolate and lemon zest.

Korea's Saeol Biofood Company presented A+ Minari, a sweet tea derived from water parsley, a highly antioxidant plant containing vitamins B and C as well as folic acid, potassium, and the bioflavonoids isorhamnetin, persicarin, and alpha-pinene. Made in Canada with golden brown — that is, not green — peas, **No Nuts Golden Peabutter** has a light, creamy taste and spreads really well. It's a godsend for nut-allergy sufferers. A lightly sparkling infusion of filtered water and organic silver-needle jasmine tea Belmont's **Golden Star Tea Company** was one of the show's standouts. Another intriguing new beverage was **O.N.E. coffee-fruit drink**, a high-antioxidant, high-polyphenol, naturally caffeinated concoction made of the whole fruit that contains coffee beans, flavored with acerola, pitanga, and other Brazilian flavors.

Among those companies based far afield whose products we'll soon see in the East Bay is **Stonehouse 27**, whose slow-cooked, low-salt, agave-sweetened sauces based on co-owner Sharon Fernandes' Portuguese/Anglo-Indian heritage will now be sold at The Pasta Shop in Oakland. Now living in Tennessee, Fernandes told me about her childhood meals in a Christian household in Mumbai:

"We had steak, potatoes, and pot roast — but with all the flavors of these beautiful Indian spices. My mom would marinate the meat a day in advance, coating it with peppers and garlic and cumin and cinnamon. She would make meatloaf with Indian flavors, pot pie and mashed potatoes — all with Indian

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flavors. Everyday things were really spiced up, and that's kind of all I knew."

She drew upon those memories to create a tamarind-and-date sauce, a cilantro-and-coconut sauce, and four others including two cashew-and-cream sauces, one spicy and one mild.

Having relocated to London as a young wife and computer engineer, Fernandes would invite non-Indian friends over for meals.

"I'd make steak and potatoes the way I'd grown up eating them, and everyone would say, 'Wow! What? Is this Indian food?' And I said, 'Yes, it is. It is.'" — *Anneli Rufus*

Tags: [Peerless Coffee](#), [Mr. Espresso](#), [Stonehouse 27](#), [Peabutter](#), [Vignette Wine Country Soda](#), [Fancy Food Show](#)
