

BUYER'S EDGE



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SOUTHERN MADE

Treats for the hosts

Items lovingly crafted in the region make ideal choices for summer gifting.

By Linda Jerkins For the AJC

Cheesy bites

For many Southerners, it's not a celebration without cheese straws. But if you aren't up to the challenge of making your own buttery, cheesy snack, buy a bag or box of the must-have party classic from Georgia's Chinaberry Foods.

The company: Started in 2005, Chinaberry Foods is based in Thomson, Ga. The bakery (off I-20 at Exit 175) is a popular stop for Atlantans heading to Charleston, S.C.

The name: The company is named for the Chinaberry tree, which grows freely in Georgia.

The founder: Tommy Samuels. After retiring from the travel and hospitality industry, Samuels started baking and helping his wife with her antique business in the old family house. Eventually, the bakery expanded. Now it occupies the entire space.

What's popular: Cheese straws. Loyal customers say Samuels' "secret" recipe is a perfect blend of sharp cheddar cheese, butter – and bite. Prices range from \$9.95 for a 6-ounce bag to \$22.95 (plus shipping) for a white tin. The tin, which holds about six dozen of the waferlike cheese straws, is a favorite for holidays and hostess gifts.

Square off: Despite the name, cheese straws come in various sizes and shapes. Samuels discovered the square shape worked best for shipping nationwide, which is 75-80 percent of his business.

Where to buy: In the Atlanta area, buy Chinaberry Foods cheese straws at Lucy's Market (lucysmarket.com), 102 W. Paces Ferry Road, or visit www.chinaberryfoods.com.



Cheese straws from Georgia's Chinaberry Foods are party and cocktail favorites. CONTRIBUTED BY CHINABERRY FOODS

BEST OF THE SOUTH

Do you have favorite finds from around the South that you give as gifts, buy for your home or rave about to friends? If so, send your suggestions to: ljerkins@gmail.com. Also find more Southern-made products, featured in the AJC, at Southernfinds on Facebook or [twitter@southernfinds1](https://twitter.com/southernfinds1).

Worth its salt

After running a taqueria in Columbia, S.C., for 12 years, Suzi Sheffield was ready for a change. But the former restaurant owner and chef wasn't hot to leave the kitchen. So the Atlanta native headed home and developed a recipe for a new product – and a successful new business.

The company: Founded in Atlanta's Old Fourth Ward in 2010, Beautiful Briny Sea makes organic table salt blends. It is a member of Slow Food, Georgia Organics and the Southern Foodways Alliance.

The name: "The Beautiful Briny" was a song in the old Disney movie "Bedknobs and Broomsticks." The company logo is a photo of Sheffield's father, who grew up on a South Georgia peanut farm and went to the U.S. Naval Academy, as he looks over the Pacific Ocean. The name and logo capture the spirit of the company: integrity with a dash of playfulness.

The goods: Currently, 10 flavors of handmade salts, including rosemary, truffle, pink peppercorn and lavender. A stylish, 4-ounce tin of salt is \$7-\$8. A 3-ounce tin of truffle salt is \$20-\$24. The hand-harvested salts are blended with organic spices and fresh, locally grown herbs.



Atlanta-based Beautiful Briny Sea makes organic table salt blends. French Picnic and Campfire are seasonal best-sellers. CONTRIBUTED BY: BEAUTIFUL BRINY SEA

What's hot: French Picnic (Dijon mustard and herbs) and Campfire (smoked salt, sumac, chile pepper blend and cumin) are seasonal best-sellers. Truffle and Magic Unicorn (smoked paprika, garlic, rosemary and celery seed) are popular year-round.

Other favorites: Friends Forever (honey) has a cult following.

Up next: A turkey brine, plus a sweet and spicy line of organic cane sugar blends.

Where to buy: In the Atlanta area, find salts at various locations of the Cook's Warehouse (www.cookswarehouse.com) and at the Beehive, 1250 Caroline St. NE (thebeehiveatl.com). Also at fo@beautifulbrinysea.com.

A cut above

A native of Summerville, S.C., Chris Williams spent a lot of time hanging out in his grandfather's shop, watching him turn old band saw blades into knives.

That's where his love for crafting and making knives began. After a 13-year career as an investment banker in the Carolinas, Williams decided to trade in his old career and carve out a new one.

The company: Williams Knife Co. opened in Johns Island, S.C., in 2010. The shop creates 50 to 75 knives a week.

The goods: Handcrafted specialty knives for hunting, fishing, the kitchen and general-purpose use. Customized knives are a specialty.

There are 75 different wood options and 10 trim options. In addition to customized knives, there are stock knives, ranging from \$150 to \$850.

These include 15 gourmet kitchen knives, 10 hunting knives and four fishing knives. They also can be customized.

Materials: Knives come in both domestic and exotic woods, with handle materials in mother-of-pearl, abalone and various types of bone and antler.

What's popular: The Edisto Oyster Knife (\$300), with its functionality and craftsmanship, gets the most attention.



The Edisto oyster knife was made to tackle the small, tight clumped-together oysters found along the coast of the Carolina Lowcountry. CONTRIBUTED BY WILLIAMS KNIFE CO.

Other favorites: The Tugalo (\$250) paring knife and the Damascus Savannah (\$600), an all-purpose hunting and skinning knife perfect for everyday kitchen chores.

Claim to fame: The Edisto Oyster Knife was the overall winner in Garden & Gun magazine's "Made in the South" awards in 2011.

What's next: Handcrafted tables, featuring wooden or stainless steel tabletops, steak knives, clam knives, custom beer tap handles and golf divot replacers.

Where to buy: Online at www.williamsknife.com. In Atlanta, find Williams' knives at the Preserving Place, 1170 Howell Mill Road (preservingplace.com).

GEAR

Have a no-spill sip and a gluten-free bar

Cup from MAM has a hands-free mouthpiece and seals tightly.

Kids are messy. Really messy. And supposedly spill-free sippy cups are no match for a determined or clumsy toddler. MAM's Sports Cup is changing that with a cup that has a specially designed mouthpiece for little ones to sip from without needing to snap or pop open. No need to flip up a straw or hand-adjust an opening that could introduce unnecessary and potentially harmful germs. Your child just has to suck the mouthpiece to drink.

While it's easy for young kids to drink from, it doesn't leak like many other cups on the market. It has a tight seal under the mouthpiece and a snap cap for additional security, so you can throw it in a bag and not worry about spills.

The Sports Cup is made from BPA-free plastic to help keep baby safe, holds 11 ounces of liquid and is recommended for ages 12 months and older. It has a molded, curved body that's easy for little hands to grip, making it a good transition from a bottle.

To purchase or find a list of retailers, visit mambaby.com. Price is \$6.99.

SHELBY SHEEHAN-BERNARD, MCCLATCHY-TRIBUNE

Gluten-free seed bars deliver on taste

You knew it was only a matter of time: Clif's Bars latest venture is for the gluten-free crowd – the soy- and dairy-free, as well. So much for what it doesn't have. What's in the bars? Flavors range from coconut and sesame seeds to cherry and pumpkin seeds. Our favorite: lemon vanilla and chia seeds. It's one of the rare gluten-free products that's tasty.

Kit's Organic Fruit & Seed Bars, \$17.99 (box of 12); www.clifbar.com/food/products

SAM MCMANIS, THE SACRAMENTO BEE



The special opening on MAM's Sports Cup features a mouthpiece that doesn't need to be snapped or popped to open. CONTRIBUTED

Where can I find it?

By Sabine Morrow For the AJC

Q: Growing up, my favorite candy bar was Zagnut. I wanted to introduce my favorite to the newest generation, but with no luck. Can you help us, please? In and around Atlanta would be great, but I have sisters in south Georgia and north Florida who have the same memories. We would drive a long way to enjoy another Zagnut! – Pat and Linda Puterbaugh, email

A: Most of the year, Zagnut candy bars, a crunchy combination of peanut butter and coconut, are pretty difficult to find. However, each summer, Cost Plus World Market offers a variety of retro candy and sodas, with Zagnut on that list. They won't last forever, so if you're a Zagnut fan, this is the time to stock up. Cost Plus World Market, 3330 Piedmont Road, Atlanta, 404-814-0801, has Zagnut candy bars for \$1.99 each.

Q: I am lactose intolerant, and one day I was fortunate to find Lactaid brand yogurt in the grocery store. I quickly bought all the yogurt, and was so happy but, alas, I have been unable to find lactose-free yogurt since then. Do you know if it is still available in this area? Thank you very much. – Regina Gore, Snellville

A: Lactaid discontinued production of its lactose-free yogurt in 2012 because "sales didn't meet expectations," but that doesn't mean that you're out of luck when it comes to enjoying yogurt. Green Valley Organics makes lactose-free yogurt in a variety of flavors, including blueberry, peach and honey. The Kosher certified, gluten-free yogurt is made with dairy and contains active cultures. You'll find 6-ounce cartons of Green Valley Organics lactose-free yogurt for \$1.69 each at Whole Foods Market, 2111 Briarcliff Road, Atlanta, 404-634-7800.

Q: We used to buy the best frozen hamburger patties from Costco that were fully cooked, and I believe they were called Quick and Easy. We can no longer find them at Costco or online, and I hope you can help me locate a store that carries this brand. Thank you. – Beth Buntun, Suwanee

A: I think the reason you're having trouble finding your pre-cooked burgers patties is because you've got a little glitch in the moniker. They're called Quick 'N Eat cooked Angus choice beef patties. I checked with Costco, 1550 Mall of Georgia Blvd., Buford, 678-288-3009, and was told that there were 141 boxes of the burger patties in stock. They're priced at \$18.81 for a dozen patties on Costco.com, but the associate I spoke with didn't have a store price.

Q: I have been looking for Red Rock ginger ale with the red label, not green. Any idea where I can find it? Thank you. – Arlene Henry, email

A: Arlene, Red Rock ginger ale got its start in Atlanta, but it's now owned by Sensient Technologies, which creates flavors and fragrances for large companies all over the globe. If you want Red Rock ginger ale, then you'll have to go with the green label, because that's the only way it's available. Red Rock does offer a red label, but that's for its cola. You'll find both in 12-ounce bottles for \$1.79 at David's Produce and Country Store, 3561 Lavista Road, Decatur, 404-325-0709.

Having trouble finding a particular item? We'll try to help you locate it. Because of the volume of mail, we cannot track down every request. Write to us at Buyer's Edge Find It, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 223 Perimeter Center Parkway N.E., Atlanta, GA 30346; email sabinem.morrow@gmail.com (include your name, the city you live in and a daytime phone number).