

# Richmond Times-Dispatch



## Potential buyers get taste of Va. products

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Published: May 14, 2008

How can a product whose motto is "Makes raccoon taste almost as good as possum" not win the best-new-product award at the

Virginia Food and Beverage Expo?

Jim and Lois Appleby's spicy Road Kill barbecue sauce took the honor yesterday at the state-sponsored show at the Greater Richmond Convention Center. More than 100 exhibitors participated.

When it hits the tongue, the Road Kill sauce tastes sweet and spicy, but that initial sensation is followed shortly by a blast of heat.

Other winners in the new-product category were Sabrosa Foods Inc. of Hampton and Spice Rack Chocolates of Fredericksburg, which tied.

Duane Thompson, a former linebacker for Virginia State University, incorporated Sabrosa in 2006. He created the award-winning salsa in his college dorm room from vegetables his grandmother brought to him.

Thompson, who had a sensitive stomach, used roasted bell peppers rather than tomatoes as a base for his salsa because peppers are less acidic. His company will introduce an asparagus-based salsa soon, he said.

Mary Schellhammer, a former personal chef, started Spice Rack Chocolates with her husband, Paul, two years ago. Her hand-painted, milk-free, herb-and-spice-laced chocolates are so pure that a 9 to 11-gram piece per day can satisfy a person's chocolate craving, she claims. A grapefruit-lavender-flavored chocolate was the winner.

Best new beverage product went to Biofree-USA Corp. of Henrico County for its Fizza carbonated milk-based, lactose-free flavored drinks. The drinks will be marketed by Marva Maid Dairy Products of Newport News once production ramps up this summer, said George Lewis, a sales manager for Marva Maid.

The state Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services puts on the food and beverage event every two years to show off Virginia products to food brokers, supermarkets and other potential buyers.

Erik Brown was one of several buyers for Whole Foods Market, a natural and organic foods supermarket chain that will open a store in Short Pump this fall. "It's a good event to bring local foods to the community," said Brown, who was making his first visit to the show.

For the Applebys, who started their business in the Southwest Virginia town of Ewing in 2003, it was their first time at the food and beverage show. Jim Appleby praised the state's efforts to help small food manufacturers.

Another exhibitor, Tim Wendell, began selling his Grand Pop's Best kettle corn on weekends at fairs and festivals in the Richmond area.

The former full-time insurance broker made kettle corn in his garage at first but now has a manufacturing plant near Chesterfield Towne Center.

Wendell, who attended the show in a grandpop get-up that included a fake bushy gray mustache and eyebrows, said he still has a few clients but that making and selling kettle corn is a lot more fun. Contact Greg Edwards at (804) 649-6390 or [gedwards@timesdispatch.com](mailto:gedwards@timesdispatch.com) .