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UPDATE

# GOURMET NEWS®

THE BUSINESS NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOURMET INDUSTRY

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[www.gourmetnews.com](http://www.gourmetnews.com)

## Wholesale site provides additional channel for producers, brokers and buyers

BY ROCELLE ARAGON

*Holiday buying guide launched in October*

Just 15 months after coming online, Buyers' Best Friend (BBF), a site founded by a food broker and a software engineer, has become the world's largest wholesale catalog for specialty products. The site sells only to accredited wholesale buyers, and at press time carried more than 86,000 SKUs from almost 1,500 sellers. The majority

is specialty food, but kitchenware, cookware and other categories are also represented.

Based in San Francisco, [www.bbfdirect.com](http://www.bbfdirect.com) is free for sellers to join and list their products. Revenue is generated from upgrade options and ads. Over 2,000 registered, pre-qualified buyers use the site, including retailers such as Bi-Rite, Zingerman's and Zabar's. The site features many endorsements from both sellers and buyers, mostly on how the site saves time and grows

sales. Buyers can purchase from multiple producers or brokers at once, without having to open new accounts for each; sellers are immediately connected to buyers all over the country.

By end-2011, the site hopes to hit over 100,000 SKUs, from more than 2,000 sellers. Its conservative projection for year-end is more than 30,000 cases of product sold. Toward that goal, the site launched a Holiday Buying Guide mini-site in

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## Gourmet Housewares Show a hit in New York

BY LORRIE BAUMANN

GLM's reinvention of the Gourmet Housewares Show as a section of the New York International Gift Fair drew praise from the exhibitors who saw the benefits of the new collocation during this August's show. Those included greater traffic in the exhibit hall, increased press attention, and convenient access to one of the largest local retail markets on the face of the Earth.

Gourmac Marketing Director

Monique Haas was among those who said she and her company are very happy with the show's new location. "It's a smaller exhibit area than in years past, but we feel the retailers are coming out, and that's what makes it worth it for us," she said.

Gourmac was displaying Progressus frozen diamonds ice trays and six-bladed knives for great garnishes. The frozen diamonds ice trays are representative of a trend

for creative ways of cooling drinks for holiday entertaining that was seen across the show floor. Also drawing attention in the Gourmac booth was the Hutzler egg scrambler and separator, a nominee for best new product at the show.

Gourmac is known for its colorful kitchen utensils and melamine dishware, and its booth at the show was a riot of red, gold, and green. Those colors along with bright

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## FDA REINSPECTION FEES TAKE EFFECT THIS MONTH

BY ROCELLE ARAGON

*NASFT, others raise serious concerns for industry*

The hourly fees for reinspection by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) that take effect on Oct. 1 are filled with potential problems for importers and the specialty food industry, according to comments filed by the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade (NASFT).

The fees are part of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), and are intended to fund the FDA's greatly expanded food safety responsibilities. Under the law passed in January, the FDA is entitled to collect fees to fund reinspection of domestic or foreign food facilities that are found to have possible food safety violations.

On Aug. 1, the FDA released a Federal Register notice of the fees: \$225 per hour for domestic facilities and \$325 per hour for foreign facilities. (The latter figure was originally published as \$335, but was officially corrected by the FDA on Aug. 26.) The notice also detailed the conditions and actions by the FDA for which the hourly fees would apply.

Comments on the fees' effect specifically on small business are due Oct. 17, while comments on the fees in general are due Oct. 31. However, comments submitted will be considered for the next fiscal year, not 2012.

The overall FSMA is already under scrutiny. In a closely-watched suit, produce giant Del Monte is suing the FDA and Oregon's Public Health department for insufficiently proving that the company's cantaloupes were the cause of a salmonella outbreak. In September, all Mexican papayas imported into the US were placed under an Import Alert and detained without inspection.

If this had happened in October,

*Continued on PAGE 10*

## Retail trade group launches year-long "Retail Means Jobs" campaign

*Retail is responsible for one in four jobs, 18 percent of GDP – NRF study*

The National Retail Federation (NRF) has launched a year-long advocacy campaign on behalf of specific policies affecting the U.S. retail industry and the \$2.48 trillion in GDP and 41.6 million American jobs it supports.

The campaign will include lobbying, grassroots, ads, social media and more. A centerpiece of the campaign is [www.RetailMeansJobs.com](http://www.RetailMeansJobs.com), a website housing new research conducted for NRF by leading firm PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

(PwC), which shows that retail directly and indirectly supported nearly one in four U.S. jobs and provided 18 percent of GDP in 2009.

"The retail industry supports a quarter of our nation's jobs and will continue to be at the forefront of our economic recovery," said NRF President and CEO Matthew Shay.

The biggest in NRF's 100-year history, the campaign supports specific policy recommendations: corporate tax reform, passage of pending Free Trade Agreements, steps to make it easier for foreign visitors to obtain visas so they can travel to the U.S. and shop in U.S. stores, passing

the Main Street Fairness Act to level the playing field for sales tax collection, modernizing aging transportation infrastructure that slows down the retail supply chain and drives up costs, repeal or delay of a health care employer mandate, and protecting consumer privacy while promoting innovations like mobile marketing.

At the foundation of "Retail Means Jobs" is the PwC study, which found that retail (including food services and drinking places) directly and indirectly accounted for 41.6 million full-time and part-time jobs, or 24

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## WHOLESALE SITE

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October, specifically for seasonal products and orders. A similar mini-site during the recent Summer Fancy Food Show drew hundreds of visitors and order inquiries, and a second is planned for the upcoming winter show. A wholesale buyers' portal in partnership with the upcoming Good Food awards is also in the works.

The insight on the specialty food industry and its needs comes via Joyce Guan, BBF co-founder and Vice President of Sales. An independent broker who also maintains her business separate from BBF, Guan noticed how much of her workday was consumed by travel and repetitive paperwork—instead of strategy, building relationships or actual sales. “It was all very fragmented, and I knew there had to be a better way,” she said. Guan spoke to her partner Sah, who wrote a software program to simplify her work. Other brokers began requesting their own versions, and BBF was born.

An important factor in BBF's growth is how easy it is for producers to set up

shop. “If you can email us a PDF of your catalog and an Excel file of prices, you can start selling,” says Adam Sah, the site's co-founder and CEO. A former senior software engineer at Google, Sah is familiar with processing masses of real-time data and the

security required for e-commerce.

The site is also unusually transparent. Buyers can search for vendors by product category, price level, sales volume, sample availability and as new or established sellers. New orders, buyers, sellers—with amounts concealed for confidentiality—hot products and hot producers are regularly updated and displayed onscreen, creating an addictive snapshot of what is actually selling in the wholesale specialty market. Industry professionals have also contributed original articles on the wholesale food system, choosing and working with a co-packer.

Though still mainly serving the U.S. market, the site has also drawn international interest. “Frankly, the excitement from international buyers and sellers was a surprise to us, and we're still figuring it all out,” says Sah. “Meanwhile, the catalog is maintaining a nice balance of mostly domestic brands and some aspiring international brands, and since we break out minimum order sizes and available distributors, it's pretty easy for domestic buyers to navigate.” To help serve international buyers, BBF has partnered with experienced domestic sellers, exporters and a few overseas distributors, and has facilitated introductions for buyers in Canada, Japan, Australia and Mexico. **GN**

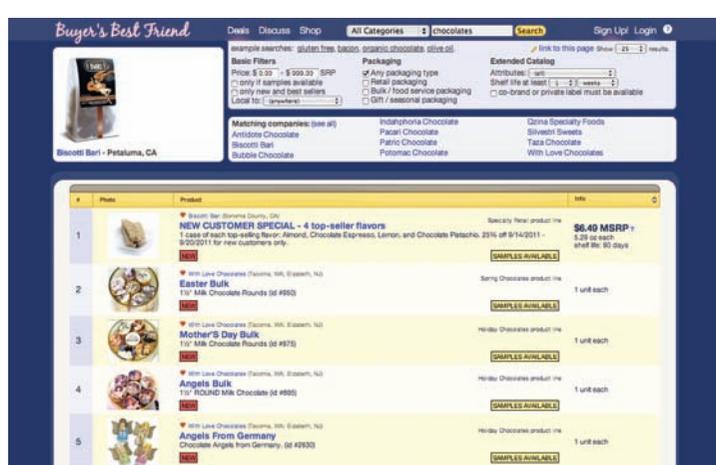
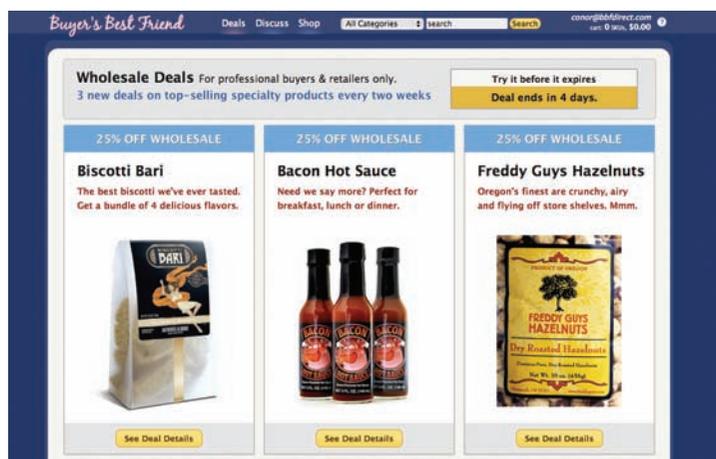
## INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES

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England Natural Bakers, R. W. Garcia (natural tortilla chips) and Rising Sun Farms (appetizers, dressings and desserts). Several restaurant groups built around natural or organic food also made the list.

The coffee and tea sector was hot as well: retailers Teavana and CoffeeForLess.com, fair trade coffee importer Sustainable Harvest, syrups company Monin and roaster and distributor Ferris Coffee & Nut were all on the list. On the separate Retail industry list, Seattle Coffee Gear (equipment sales and maintenance), and Mayorga Coffee were among the top 5000.

Also on the list were private labelers Steven Roberts Original Desserts, the Plenus Group and Sokol & Co. (SoloFoods); grocers The Fresh Market and Publix; cupcake retailers Crumbs and Magnolia Bakery; 600-lb. Gorillas (frozen cookie dough and ice cream sandwiches); online retailer GourmetGiftBaskets.com; cheesemaker Blaser's USA; Paciugo Italian Gelato; Oreana Winemaking (supplier to Costco, Whole Foods and independent distributors); Look's Gourmet Food (makers of the Bar Harbor brand of specialty seafood); Goodwives Hors d'oeuvres (upscale appetizers); Snack Factory (pretzel chips); and Isamax Snacks (20 varieties of whoopee pies, gourmet muffins and cookies). **GN**



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