

# General News

## Fast-Growing Wholesale-Only Site Welcomes Kitchenware Sellers

BY ROCELLE ARAGON

A growing number of kitchenware and houseware sellers are signing up for Buyers' Best Friend ([www.bbfdirect.com](http://www.bbfdirect.com)), a San Francisco-based site that recently became the world's largest wholesale catalog for specialty products.

Selling only to accredited wholesale buyers, at press time, the site carried more than 102,000 SKUs from almost 1,500 sellers. The majority is specialty food, but kitchenware, cookware and other categories are also represented.

"We started out in specialty food, but are quickly adding a significant amount of kitchenware and houseware products, specifically growing at least 5 percent a week. Kitchenware is a natural fit for BBF, and we're excited to grow this important portion of our catalog. We currently have 129 brands and 15,014 products (SKUs) in houseware, and 28 brands—1,506 products (SKUs) in kitchenware," said Conor Lee, the site's Director of Marketing and Strategy.

Kitchenware sellers on the site include Swiss Diamond, Bambu, Grind peppermills and Engstrom International, distributors of the TRF reusable baking sheets.

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, including a fast-growing paid program that includes hand-brokering services and introductions to key accounts as well as ads. More than 2,000 registered, prequalified buyers use the site, including stores such as Zingerman's and San Francisco's Rainbow Grocery. Lee said the site is adding registered non-grocery buyers at the rate of dozens a day.

The site features many endorsements from both sellers and buyers, mostly on how the site saves time and builds 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. In October, the site launched a Holiday

Buying Guide mini-site, specifically for seasonal products and orders. A mini-site during the Summer Fancy Food Show drew hundreds of visitors and order inquiries, and a second is planned for the upcoming winter food show.

The insight on the gourmet retail industry and its needs comes via Joyce Guan, BBF Co-Founder and Vice President of Sales. An independent specialty food 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, Adam 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," said 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.

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," said 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.

**HUE BAMBOO**

**An Island Bamboo™ Collection**

*On Special... Available Now.  
Call us and mention you saw it in KNHR.*

*Small Over-the-Sink Cutting Board w/ Silicone Colander*



**The Largest Selection of Eco-Friendly Bamboo Kitchenware**

### Compact & Versatile

- 10" x 18" Moso Bamboo Cutting Board
- Stand-alone colander for hands-free draining.
- Goes from rinse to steam in one step!
- Collapses flat for easy storage.

### Durable & Long Lasting Silicone

Heat Resistant to 450° Degrees  
Safe on Nonstick Cookware  
Non-Toxic and Won't Absorb Flavor or Odor  
Removable and Dishwasher Safe

### Available Colors

Vibrant red  
Dark green  
Lime green  
Turquoise  
Simple orange  
Burgundy

**8" Stand Alone Colander/Steamer**

Heat Resistant up to

**450°**



Order Island Bamboo™ kitchenware products.

Visit us online at [www.IslandBamboo.com](http://www.IslandBamboo.com) to browse the entire collection.



**Gourmet Catalog  
Buying Group**

Wilshire Industries, LLC

1001 Calle Recodo, San Clemente, CA 92673 • 949-492-9921 • [info@WilshireIndustries.com](mailto:info@WilshireIndustries.com)

Island Bamboo™