

# foodfinds

Here at *Taste*, we love food, in all forms. There are great chefs who produce culinary wonders for dining in. Every year, the Specialty Food Association recognizes exceptional products with the sofi awards (which stands for “specialty outstanding food innovation”). These companies here all have received sofi awards.

BY LISE STERN



The Maine Crisp Company

and toasty nuttiness from the walnuts, and an unexpected hit of rosemary. **Maple Cinnamon Crisps** include zante currants, ground almonds, and sesame seeds. Getz uses several organic ingredients, and each of the three flavors includes made-in-Maine ingredients, starting with that buckwheat. They also have Maine honey or maple syrup and sea salt.

## Toffee Love

### Vermont Amber Organic Toffee

White River Junction, Vt.

603-738-7466

[vermontamber.com](http://vermontamber.com)

Elizabeth Feinberg of Vermont Amber Organic Toffee calls herself a Toffee Evangelist, and she’s certainly got me in her camp. She has created a different kind of toffee, made with organic butter. First, it’s much thinner, and therefore crispier, than most toffees. Second, it has no nuts, third, the flavors are unusual and creative, and finally, it is not topped with chocolate, so the flavor of the toffee shines through more cleanly. “I didn’t want to have to temper chocolate,” Feinberg says. “Now, it’s kind of cool, as it differentiates my toffee from others. It also forces me to mix the flavors into the toffee, you have to think a bit when mixing those flavors into toffee.” Her **Fennel Seed Toffee** won the silver sofi award last year. The seeds offer an interesting textural contrast to the sugary buttery toffee, plus a satisfying almost savory element, with the subtle licorice notes that go with the spice. A Good Food award winner is the **Salted Sesame**. For Mother’s Day, **Wow Mom** includes lemon peel, lavender, rose hips, and vanilla wafers, and **Cocoa Nib** offers subtle chocolate notes.

There is a **No Bits, Just Toffee** option, a response to those wanting something a little less “interesting.”

## Bucking a Trend

### The Maine Crisp Company

Waterville, Maine

207-213-9296

[themainecrispcompany.com](http://themainecrispcompany.com)

Karen Getz used to make cheese with her husband on a Vermont dairy farm. Four years ago, they moved to Maine. During a visit to the state’s northernmost county, Aroostook, Getz says, “I saw fields of buckwheat growing and had an idea. I told my husband when we move I’m going to start a business making something with buckwheat and wild blueberries. I’ve always loved baking and just started

experimenting.” The result is **Maine Crisps**, a line of terrific and unusual crackers. Buckwheat is not, in fact, related to wheat, but is a seed in the rhubarb family, so Maine Crisps are both gluten and grain free.

Perhaps it was her experience with cheese that led Getz to create a cracker that goes so perfectly with all kinds—from creamy chevre to sharp cheddar to semisoft brie to pungent blue. The **Cranberry Almond Crisps**, which also contain pumpkin seeds and Herbes de Provence, won a bronze sofi award in the cracker category. The flagship **Blueberry Walnut Crisps** have a hint of sweetness

PHOTOGRAPHS: THIS PAGE: COURTESY OF THE MAINE CRISP COMPANY; OPPOSITE PAGE LEFT: LISE STERN; RIGHT: COURTESY OF RUNAMOK MAPLE

## Enhanced Maple

### Runamok Maple

293 Fletcher Road

Fairfax, Vt.

802-849-7943

[runamokmaple.com](http://runamokmaple.com)

In New England, we are accustomed to excellent pure maple syrup. Which is great as is. But then, there are enhancements that can make it that much better. Runamok Maple won a best new product soft award for their **Ginger Root Infused Maple Syrup**. Co-owners Eric and Laura Sorkin each have master's degrees in Environmental Management; Eric also has a law degree and Laura a culinary degree. Together they have created an impressive collection of infused and flavored syrups, beautifully packaged in distinctive glass bottles. **Makrut Lime Leaf** has a subtle citrus tang that goes nicely in cocktails. **Smoked Chili Pepper** enhances salad dressings and is great drizzled over roasted sweet potatoes, as is the **Smoked with Pecan Wood**. As a



Stony Brook  
Wholehearted Foods



Runamok Maple

tea lover, I'm partial to the floral notes of the **Jasmine Tea Infused**.

Three **Barrel-Aged** syrups include **Whiskey**, **Bourbon**, and **Rum**. The differences are subtle yet distinctive, adding a smokiness and a hint of the individual spirits. A little goes a long way, as maple has its own intense sweetness. Any of the flavors are great drizzled over yogurt or ice cream. Try the infusions in hot or iced tea, or even just added to a glass of seltzer water. And your morning oatmeal will never be the same.

## Golden Goodness

### Stony Brook Wholehearted Foods

500 Technology Farm Drive

Geneva, N.Y.

877-292-8369

[wholeheartedfoods.com](http://wholeheartedfoods.com)

One man's surplus is another's gold—in the case of Stony Brook Wholehearted Foods, liquid gold. Greg Woodworth and Kelly Coughlin were approached by a local farmer who produced prepared squash for area

markets, and had all these squash seeds just going to waste. The couple began pressing the seeds into an incredible deep amber **Butternut Squash Seed Oil**, which won a silver soft award. The oil is nutty and toasty and buttery, great for roasting vegetables; it enhances the natural sweetness of squash, and is marvelous on cauliflower. Try it on salad for a departure from the usual olive oil. They also make a deep emerald green **Roasted Pumpkin Seed Oil** (try it drizzled over a bowl of pumpkin soup) and pale gold **Organic Sunflower Seed Oil**. All are made entirely with seeds grown in the U.S. The oils lend distinctive flavors to muffins, scones, and breads.

Stony Brook makes a line of squash and pumpkin seeds. **Sweet Chili Butternut Pepitas** have the hull, and are crunchy, slightly sweet from maple syrup, with a kick from chili powder. **Maple Pepitas** are hull-less pumpkin seeds with maple syrup, great in yogurt, salads, or by the handful. **Seed Protein Powders** are 100 percent powdered seeds, great in smoothies and baked goods. **T**