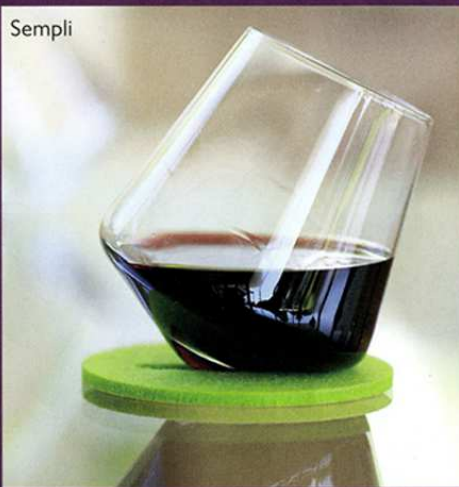


FANCY FOOD

& CULINARY PRODUCTS

THE GOURMET PRODUCTS MAGAZINE FOR RETAILERS

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Sencha Naturals

Tea Forte



Sweet Shop USA

CRACKERS AND CHEESE 8

EASTER 16

ONE POT MEALS 22

COVERING THE COVER 4

DINNER DINNER DILEMMAS

By Natalie Hammer Noblitt

SOLVED

One pot is all you need when meal kits take on the chore of creating great flavor.



Carafe Wine and Steak Grilling Sauces from **Braswell's Food Company** (912/764-6191 or braswells.com) double as delicious flavor boosters for all kinds of easy meals.



Delicae Gourmet (800/942-2502 or delicaegourmet.com) now offers 18 dinners in its line of all-natural Slow Cooker Dinner Kits. New varieties include Hillside Vineyard Tuscan Chicken, Rocky River White Bean Chili and Hawaiian Luau Sweet & Sour Chicken.



Products from **Chef Ann Kirsabom's Gourmet Sauces** (chefann.com) offer a splash of exciting flavors like tequila, sherry or rum that can also be used to create one-pot meals.



Carolina Creole from **Luquire Family Foods** (843/485-4344 or carlinacreole.com) takes authentic southern flavor and puts it in a recipe that's easy for everyone to enjoy.

Your shoppers want a flavorful healthy meal for dinner that's quick and doesn't require a sink full of dishes. It may sound like a tall order, but you can solve this nightly mealtime scramble by offering the right gourmet cooking sauces and meal-prep helpers.

If you want to know what gourmet consumers are looking at in this category, Jason Luquire of Luquire Family Foods (makers of Carolina Creole) says being able to enjoy the cooking process is a major factor in what they choose. "From the Carolina Creole point of view, it means creating a simple gourmet meal that goes from stove top to table in 20 minutes with no stress," he says. "Enjoy a glass of wine while the long grain rice or stone ground grits simmer for 20 minutes. During that time, bring Carolina Creole to a simmer and add your favorite protein."

For other shoppers, the goal is to create authentic recipes and correctly combine spices and ingredients. Meal kits and spice packs take the guesswork out of both shopping for spices and blending them in the right proportions. Add a few fresh ingredients and the perfect flavor shines through. "If it isn't ready in

less than 30 minutes, most people won't take the time to make it," says Keith Lauver, CEO of The Healthy Pantry. Authentic flavor is important, too. "Our Punjabi Curry is also a top-seller and it's a deliciously easy way to enjoy semi-homeade Indian food at your own table."

MEAL KITS WORTH MENTIONING

Finding recipe inspiration at the end of a long workday is the last thing on most consumers' minds. That's why gourmet meal kits provide the perfect foundation for a delicious dinner.

Getting meal prep down to just five minutes was the goal of Barbara Macaluso, founder of Delicae Gourmet with her husband, Lenny. Macaluso knows many cooks don't have time to prepare meals when they return at the end of the day, so she makes Delicae's Slow Cooker Dinner Kits easy to put together first thing in the morning before they leave the house. The cook comes home to find the wonderful aroma of dinner and a cooked meal that serves 10 people — plenty for having leftovers in most families, she says.

"I know that shoppers don't have time to chop vegetables and do a lot

of prep work that meals require," says Macaluso. "We created our slow cooker meals to include chopped vegetables already in the box. That's where our products stand out. They really take only five minutes to prepare and create a hearty and delicious meal."

The Delicæ Gourmet line now includes 18 Slow Cooker Dinner Kits, including three new varieties that will launch at the Fancy Food Show — Hillside Vineyard Tuscan Chicken, Rocky River White Bean Chili, and Hawaiian Luau Sweet & Sour Chicken. Other popular sellers in the line are comforting dishes like Grandma's Chicken and Rice, and Old-Fashioned Pot Roast, as well as exotic flavors like Moroccan Chicken with CousCous.

Cooks also appreciate the ability to customize the meals with their own additional ingredients, like adding mushrooms, lemon juice, red peppers or black olives to dishes as they choose, says Macaluso. Each of the kits is all-natural, contains no added salt and are gluten-free.

At The Healthy Pantry in Red Lodge, MT, Lauver says his team takes the time to be inspired for shoppers. "Our chef, Tony Sobiech, and I start with what our own families enjoy," he says. "We're both dads and we both love to cook. If our own families love a dish enough to be part of our week-night dinners, we know we're on to something." You shouldn't settle for average taste, he says, and you won't find it in the CookSimple meal kit line. "We're looking for that broad appeal, but then we give it a twist. For example, the new Skillet Lasagna with Quinoa and Corn Pasta uses a terrific quinoa noodle. Finally, we're looking for something that will still taste amazing, without compromises, in a quick-cook format."

One of the best sellers in the line has been the Cowboy Chili, Lauver says. "You can add beer or wine to the mix and you can dress it up in nearly infinite ways. You can also enjoy it as a taco for dinner, a soup for lunch or huevos rancheros for breakfast." The two newest additions to The Healthy Pantry's CookSimple line are The Skillet Lasagna (just add turkey and other simple ingredients) and a new White Bean Chili with Chia Seeds and Bell Peppers (suggested with chicken). Both meals use leaner proteins and include more fiber to be a healthy yet filling meal option. They are also both gluten free and use all-natural ingredients.

From Purely American of Athens, OH, consumers can find a line of Kosher meal kits called Cholent. Cholent is a traditional Jewish meal that is prepared on Friday before the Sabbath begins. Perfect for use in the slow cooker, these savory mixes provide the main course at Saturday's noon meal. However, busy and health-conscious consumers of all faiths can enjoy these time-saving, salt-free meal kits to prepare easy meals any day of the week, says Ray Leard. Each dinner serves 8–10 and is Kosher certified. They are all also gluten-free, high in fiber and low in fat. This line joins the company's 10 meal kits in the Slow Cooker Gourmet Line of salt-free dinners.

The Middle Eastern Lentil Cholent is a sweet and savory spiced stew that is perfect served with freshly baked bread. Moroccan Lamb Cholent is a delicious North African-style stew bursting with flavor. Adding chopped dates is one of the special suggestions from Leard. Beef Cholent is a very popular dinner that can be customized by home cooks using a favorite sauce or a cup of red wine.

The name says it all with Urban Accents' line of meal kits designed to help shoppers who need to get a home-cooked dinner on the table — Gotta Cook Tonight. "All six products in the Gotta Cook Tonight line can be cooked in one pot," says Lisa Kamerad, vice president, marketing, of the Chicago-based company. "Moroccan Tagine is our best seller. Other seasonal favorites are Goulash and Tandoori." Urban Accents business has always been spice, so it's no surprise they created a line to easily help wake up the flavor in traditional meals. "We set out to update the main dish seasoning offering with globally inspired flavors," Kamerad says. "Instead of meatloaf, pot roast and chili, we're stepping into a more exotic place with tagine, goulash, and madras curry. This gives consumers an easy, no-fail way to try new flavors and dishes."


Each packet within the Gotta Cook Tonight line of mixes has a short shopping list of eight or less ingredients and easy prep instructions. Urban Accents developed the recipes to include a protein and mostly pantry staples such as olive oil, onion and diced tomatoes.

"We have fun alternative recipes listed on our website for each product as well," says Kamerad. "Our Tandoori makes a great seasoning

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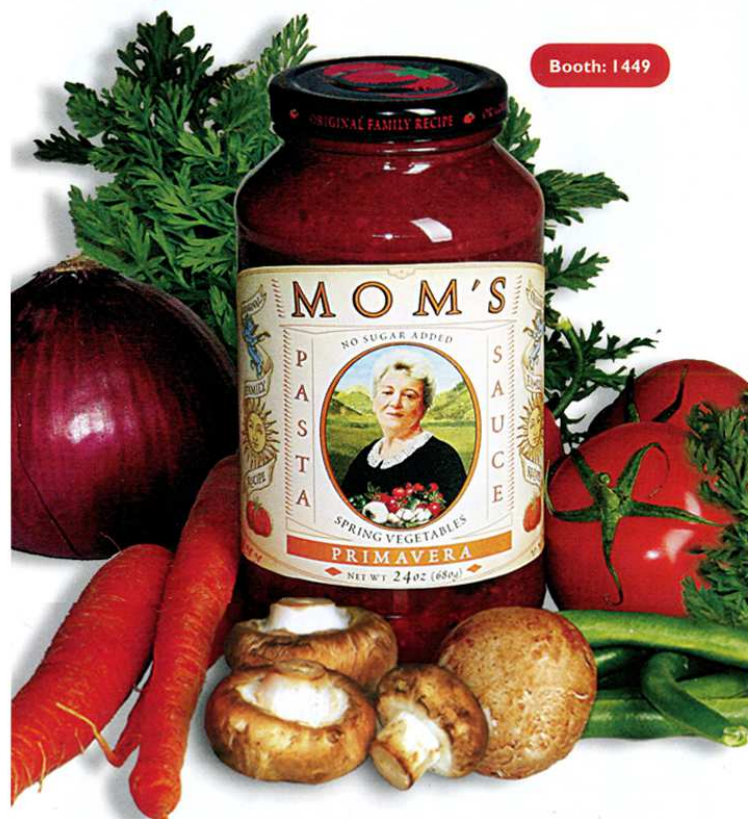
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DINNER DILEMMAS SOLVED



Mom's Primavera Pasta Sauce is the newest product from **Fisher & Wieser** (800/369-9257 or jelly.com) that can be used to create a one-pot meal.

for turkey burgers. The Santa Fe Mole can be added to pulled chicken for tacos. Tagine is delicious as a seasoning for stir fries."

SAUCES ADD BOLD FLAVOR

While the Carolina Creole of Pawleys Island, SC, wasn't initially created with easy meals in mind, it certainly fits the bill, says Luquire. "This recipe was first crafted in the early 1960s by my mother. Her goal was to provide a delicious and wholesome dish for our family that was an authentic Creole sauce with the heat dialed down just a touch."

"We suggest keeping several jars in the pantry for that busy family night or the surprise guest that deserves a great meal," he says. "It allows you to take a night off in the kitchen and enjoy." There are many ways to use the product, however, Luquire says. "While fresh shrimp is our favorite protein to add, for variety we substitute with chicken, pork or beef. In our home we use many wild game additions."

Meat doesn't have to be on the menu. Sautéed veggies or other protein work great, too. Cooks can get creative with their traditional

recipes, because the sauce works in dishes like pizza and Sloppy Joes.

Barhyte Specialty Foods of Pendleton, OR, offers a variety of flavorful sauces that can easily add bold flavor to any meal. Colette Becker, marketing supervisor, loves the Saucy Mama's Sweet Heat Marinade as a simmering sauce, or as marinade then used as a baking sauce for meat. "One of our favorite recipes is our Sweet Heat Pork Tenderloin," she says. Just bake a 2.5 pound pork roast in it after marinating at least two hours. "Any of our marinades could fall into this category, but we find that the Sweet Heat is very popular." Inspiration for the products comes from Suzie "Saucy Mama" Barhyte, she says. "We know consumers want food to taste good but not take too much time to make," Becker says. "Our products help make delicious food, but also allow for more time being spent with family and friends. The products should enhance the foods, make preparation easier and more interesting."

Another favorite recipe from Barhyte is a Cracked Pepper Shrimp Pasta using the Saucy Mama's

Cracked Pepper Marinade. "It is usually a staple for steaks, but we throw it on shrimp with fresh snap peas and asparagus and it becomes a gourmet pasta," Becker says.

Janine Somers, director of marketing for Stonewall Kitchen in Maine, says the company's year-old line of Simmering Sauces has been a hit with consumers because they are so easy to use. "We introduced the line in January 2012 with Buffalo Wing, Cacciatore, Coconut Curry, Coq Au Vin, Pulled Pork and Sloppy Joe Simmering Sauces," she says. "To date, the most popular sauces are Pulled Pork, Sloppy Joe and Cacciatore." Later came Chicken Marsala and Artichoke Piccata, and Stonewall Kitchen will introduce three more flavors this month, including Chili, Meatloaf and American Chop Suey.

"Our goal is to offer products that allow our customers to create quick and easy meals that are delicious, ranging from traditional Americana dishes to more complex entrees," Somers says. "Consumers are looking for the convenience of having a gourmet experience at home using high quality foods with rich flavors and spices. Our Simmering Sauces offer consumers the opportunity to create easy one-pot meals for all of their entertaining needs."

Beyond the simmering sauce line, shoppers often use Stonewall Kitchen's Grille Sauces and Marinades as meal flavor enhancers. "Our wide variety of flavor choices are great for grilling, roasting, baking and stir frying meats, fishes and veggies, but many are also great as a sauce in the slow cooker with your favorite meat," Somers says.

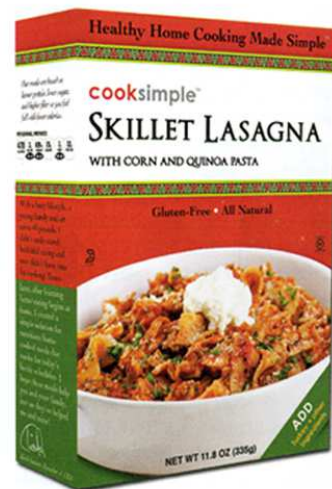
For the past five years, Braswell's Food Company of Statesboro, GA, has introduced many products designed to give cooks of all experience levels flavor versatility, but the company began its culinary traditions many decades before that. "We started our company in 1946 with Fig and Pear Preserves, and even then, we went to great lengths to show our retailers and customers to 'think outside of the jar,'" says Chris McMahon, marketing director. "We don't want to make just a salad dressing. We want to make a recipe that is great on salads, but also offers our customers many other uses, from marinades, finishing sauces, even dessert toppers."

Slow cookers still make for the ultimate in quick meals, McMahon says. "This way of cooking has evolved and, again, home cooks are realizing they can use special-

ty sauces and meal starters and come home to a meal that absolutely blows their family away," he says. To create an easy one-pot meal, combine one of Braswell's Carafe Dressings and Carafe Wine Sauces with two pounds of meat or seafood, rice or potatoes, and vegetables like mushrooms, zucchini or fresh spinach. "Throw it all in a crock pot or large stock pot on the stove and let it cook slowly while you go to work or spend time with your family and friends," McMahon suggests. "The sauces permeate and tenderize the meat and all of the added flavors meld together for a truly special meal."

Health concerns are another problem sauce producers can ease for busy cooks who still want flavor. "Consumers are reading labels and want healthy solutions resulting in pleasurable food that is time sensitive in preparation, says Chef Ann of Chef Ann Kirschom's Gourmet Sauces in Vancouver, Canada. "Our products produce instant, fresh flavor and are also fat free," she says. Chef Ann's products bring unique flavor to dishes by added a splash of flavor inspired by cocktails. Sauces in the Chef Ann line include Tequi-Lime Sauce, O'Rumba Sauce, O'Plum Sesame Sauce and Teriyaki Sauce.

"We love the combination of freshly squeezed citrus and a splash of tequila, sake or Grand Marnier for an amazing finish," she says. "Our products are unique. Citrus equals health and evokes natural goodness."



The Healthy Pantry (877/9-PANTRY or thehealthypantry.com) CookSimple recipe kits focus on taking traditional recipes and offering meals that reduce the overall glycemic load of dishes and upgrade the quality of dietary fats, among other benefits.