

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

OFF DUTY

EATING | DRINKING | STYLE | FASHION | DESIGN | DECORATING | ADVENTURE | TRAVEL | GEAR | GADGETS
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BITS & BITES: NEWS YOU CAN EAT

THE PROVISION

Cheese and Crackers Rolled Into One

Once in a great while there comes a snack we obsess over because it's just that good. The latest addition to that pantheon (and heir apparent to the cheese straw, that holiday-entertaining stalwart): blue cheese shortbreads from Farmstead, a Providence, R.I., specialty foods store and restaurant. The cookie/cracker hybrid "is mostly cheese and butter," according to resident baker and co-owner Kate Jennings. She uses whatever leftover blue cheese she has on hand in the shop that day—could be a Stilton from England, say, or Bayley Hazen from Vermont—and mixes it with butter, flour, sugar, salt and cornstarch to create a hefty shortbread with a shattering crumb. The salty-sweet flavor (the dough is rolled in coarse sugar prior to baking), flaky texture and lactic tang are addictive. A natural addition to a cheese plate, the shortbreads also make a delicious snack on their own or with tea or coffee. \$20 for 24 shortbreads, farmsteadinc.com



THE BEVERAGE

Some Like It Hot (and Fizzy)

With the season of over-eating upon us, there is nothing like the tummy-soothing bubbly refresher ginger beer. No, not the sugary mass-produced soda: Once we tried the homespun version from Rachel's Ginger Beer, we could never go back to the super-sweet stuff. The three-year-old business, which recently opened a ginger-beer bar in Seattle's Pike Place Market, has just started shipping its namesake libation nationally. Founder Rachel Marshall handcrafts the Original flavor by carbonating a blend of freshly squeezed lemon and ginger juices, organic sugar and water. The result is a concentrated quaff that's fiery yet tart, and tastes as good on its own as it does mixed into cocktails. (Try it in a Moscow Mule.) Also on offer are seasonal varieties, such as pomegranate, blood orange and cranberry—a perfect non-alcoholic alternative for the Thanksgiving table. \$78 for four 32-ounce bottles, rachelsgingerbeer.com



THE CONDIMENT

Give Cranberry Sauce a Rest

Cranberry sauce may be the usual accompaniment to the Thanksgiving turkey. But for those looking to branch out this holiday season, Casa Forcello, a maker of small-batch preserves in Mantua, Italy, has just the thing. Owner Paola Calciolari has been producing mostarda—the spicy candied-fruit condiment typically served in Italy with boiled meats—and preserves, some of which are based on her grandmother's recipes, for almost 20 years. Her plum smoked-tea compote is a full-flavored mix of plums, lapsang souchong tea and sugar, and her blood-orange marmellata, made from organic Sicilian fruit, is sunshine-bright. Like the rest of her creations, both would complement any rich bird, be it turkey or roast duck. From \$10 for plum smoked-tea compote, fairway-market.com —Gabriella Gershenson

