

# FANCY FOOD & CULINARY PRODUCTS

THE GOURMET PRODUCTS MAGAZINE FOR RETAILERS



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**Ultimate Holiday Issue**  
FABULOUS DESSERTS 14  
THE PARTY PLANNER 18  
GIVING GOURMET 31  
**COVERING THE COVER 6**

# Taste of America:

**B**ig hair, big hats, and big-time football — everything truly is bigger in Texas. But when it comes to food, quality, not quantity, is the standard in the Lone Star state.

"Texans love good food and they love to try new things," says Susan Walton, owner of Dallas-based LWC Brands, which makes Lady Walton Cookies and Bronco Bob's sauces. "People here really recognize and appreciate gourmet food and products."

That adventuresome attitude and a search for quality products have helped support upscale food stores like Whole Foods and Central Market, both of which got their starts in Texas. And it's made the state a haven for smaller gourmet food entrepreneurs.

"I think maybe it has something to do with the way Texas was founded and a desire for independence, but Texans feel good about and really support people with a pioneering and entrepreneurial attitude," says Maury Smeyne, owner of Texas Sassy Foods in Austin. "And there's a real loyalty that Texans have for Texas products."

So, what is a Texas food product? Turns out, the offerings are as vast as the state itself.

Barbecue is, of course, big business. Pecan is the state tree, so anything pecan is popular. Fish fries with locally caught catfish are truly Texan, especially in the hill country near the San Saba River. The state is also one of the top dairy states in the country, making it a mecca for gourmet cheese.

And who could forget Tex-Mex? "We created southwestern cuisine here and we are certainly influenced by Mexico," says Paula Lambert, owner of the Mozzarella Company in Dallas. "And in the 23 years we've been in business, we've seen a trend toward fusion cuisine with Mexican and even Asian influences."

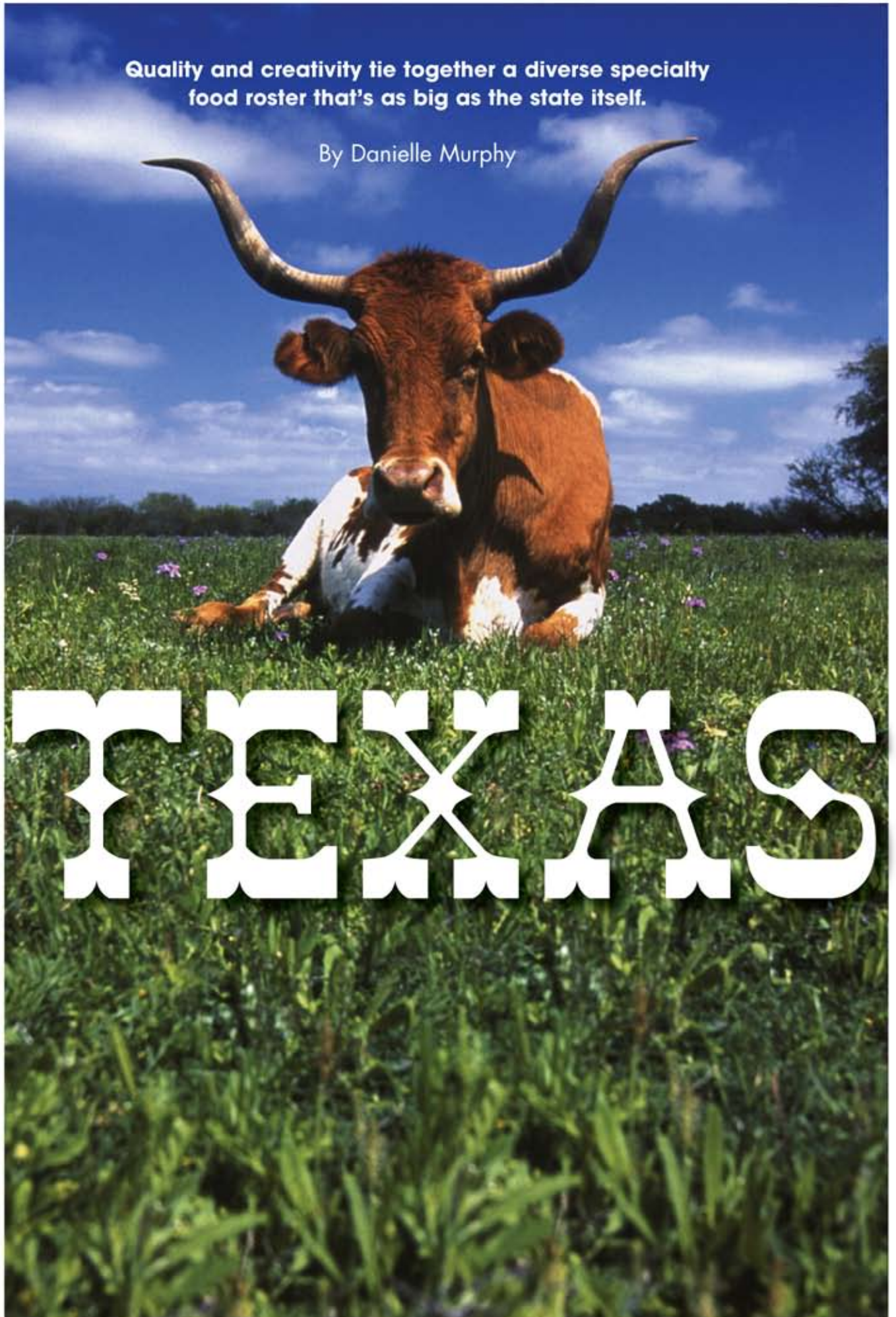
## TEXAS CHEESE

Lambert's Mozzarella Company (800/798-2954) fuses handmade, gourmet cheeses with unique Texas tastes.

The company offers an array of cheeses including fresh mozzarella, ricotta, marscapone and goat cheeses, but is probably best known for its southern-influenced

Quality and creativity tie together a diverse specialty food roster that's as big as the state itself.

By Danielle Murphy



Specialty food from the state of Texas is inspired by barbecue, spicy flavors and a whole lot more. Shown is a longhorn steer, which is often associated with the state's agriculture. Photo by Terrence Cameron courtesy of The Office of the Governor, Texas Tourism ([www.travel.state.tx.us](http://www.travel.state.tx.us)).



The Mozzarella Company (800/798-2954 or [www.mozzco.com](http://www.mozzco.com)) creates a wide variety of cheeses, but also takes inspiration from its home state by creating cheeses like these Caciottas, seasoned with chiles and herbs that reflect Texas and the Southwest. **Circle No. 242**

flavors such as: Queso Blanco with Chiles and Epazote; Queso Oaxaca, a Mexican mozzarella; and Herb Caciotta, a Texas version of Monterrey Jack that comes in flavors such as Texas Basil, Mexican Marigold Mint, Mexican Oregano, and Black Pepper and Garlic.

"Being in Texas, we're greatly influenced by the Southwest and Mexico and we use many indigenous products," says Lambert. "Another unique flavor that we offer is our Marscapone Torta layered with Pecan Pralines, which is a very Southern influence."

Fresh Mozzarella is the company's best-seller. Blanca Bianca, a raw cow's milk cheese rubbed with white wine as it ages, is the company's newest introduction.

"Our cheesemakers have been making cheese with us for over 20 years," says Lambert. "We do everything by hand and in small batches. We only do 50 to 60 pounds of cheese at a time."



Lady Walton chocolate-filled butter-wafer cookies come in a variety of flavors and are now available in miniature Bite-Size Butter Wafers that come in Butter or Cinnamon & Sugar flavors. Great alone or with ice cream, milk and hot beverages. From **LWC Brands**, 800/552-8006; [www.ladywaltons.com](http://www.ladywaltons.com) or **Circle No. 243**

#### SWEET, SOUR, SPICY

The first word that comes to mind when Maury Smeyne thinks of Texas natives is "sassy." That's precisely why he and his wife, Brenda, decided to name their specialty food company Texas Sassy Foods (866/451-6728).

"When I think of Texans, I immediately think of sassy," says Smeyne. "The dictionary definition of sassy is 'lively, spirited, jaunty.' Texans can be a little in your face about being from Texas and I think that's part of the mystique."

Smeyne believes his pickle-based products and sauces mimic that mystique.

"Our pickle is sweet, sour and spicy — in that order," says Smeyne, who admits that there are only a couple of places he can think of where "Made in Texas" won't help sell a product. "The only place where it's not an advantage is in neighboring states with schools that are rivals of Texas schools. We talked to one woman who has store near the University of Arkansas and she said she can't sell Texas products in her town because of the school rivalries."

The company's mainstay product is a Pickle Chip (jarred pickle slices), which won first place for pickle products at the Houston Hot Sauce festival. That product makes up about 40 percent of the company's sales, however, newer products like a Pickle Relish, Pickle Sauce, Mustard Sauce, Vinaigrette and Salsa Marinade are gaining momentum.

The Pickle Sauce is an offshoot of the Pickle Chips. "People loved the flavor of the juice that was in our pickles, so we developed a recipe for a sauce that is really wonderful on anything from spinach to fish," says Maury. "One woman at a show even said that it was



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Six flavors of Bee Cave Whipped Honey are flavored with pureed fruits and spices and include Natural, Lemon, Cinnamon, Raspberry, Strawberry and Orange. From **W.O. Romingers**, 512/328-7780; [www.woromingers.com](http://www.woromingers.com) or **Circle No. 244**

wonderful on vanilla ice cream. We thought she was nuts, but we tried it and it was delicious."

### MADE IN TEXAS

Sauce, marinade and salsa-maker W.O. Romingers (512/328-7780 or [www.woromingers.com](http://www.woromingers.com)) is steeped in Texas history. The company is named after the great grandfather of one of the company's owners, Stratton Cyrus. W.O. Rominger founded the Ft. Worth stockyards and stock shows and played a significant role in the development of the city.

"With the name, we decided to honor Stratton's great grandfather and the rich history of Texas," says co-owner Lisa Jardine. "We market our products as being from Texas and on our labels, it says 'Made in Texas by real Texans.'"

The company features 15 products in its sauce line; the top three sellers are Mexican Lime Chipotle Salsa, a new Roasted Guacamole Salsa and Smokey Peach Ambrosia. The company also offers six flavors of Bee Cave honey available in a natural Whipped Honey flavor; a Lemon Whipped Honey; a fresh ground cinnamon for Cinnamon Whipped Honey; a Raspberry Whipped Honey; a Strawberry Whipped Honey; an Orange Whipped Honey.

"Our honeys are made with pureed fruits and spices," says Jardine. "Our sauces use all fresh ingredients."

### PECAN PRIDE

Larry and Martha Newkirk, owners of The Great San Saba River

Pecan Co. (800/621-9121), bought a pecan orchard with more than 10,000 trees in San Saba, Texas, in 1988. They were excited by the prospect of selling the nuts, however, soon found that not everyone has the time and energy to shell a pecan. With that in mind, they began to offer pre-shelled nuts, as well as specialty food items like toppings and preserves prepared with the pecans.

"We found that the more things we could offer that were prepared, the better we'd do," says Martha. "We started by selling breads and cakes in our store, but soon found that we also needed products with a longer shelf life. That's how we came up with our preserves and our shelf-stable line."

The company's pecan pies (offered as a homemade pie or as a new Pecan Pie in a Jar kit) are the most popular products.

"We get so many pie requests that we have to cut off orders around

Thanksgiving," says Martha. "That's part of the reason we came up with the Pecan Pie in a Jar. You can order and make that anytime."

After the pie products, the most popular item is a Peach Pecan and Amaretto Preserve. The company's newest product is a Pecan Praline Topping Syrup, which is great over ice cream or waffles.

Martha points out that the taste

of the toppings is not their only selling point; the packaging is eye-catching, as well.

"We've worked really hard to suspend the nuts in the syrups and toppings," says Martha. "You see a lot of syrups where the nuts all float to the top, but we've created a formula that maintains its viscosity so the nuts stay suspended."

All of the syrups are pourable and feature large chunks of fruits and pecans.



Pecan growers Larry and Martha Newkirk have found creative ways to offer their pecans in a line of toppings and preserves, which include these Fruit Pecan toppings in Raspberry, Orange and Apple. From **The Great San Saba River Pecan Co.**, 800/621-912; [www.greatpecans.com](http://www.greatpecans.com) or **Circle No. 246**

### COOKIES AND SAUCES

Dallas-based LWC Brands (800/552-8006) offers two main lines of products — Lady Walton Cookies and Bronco Bob's Sauces.

The cookies feature two thin wafers filled with chocolate and are available in seven different flavors: Creamy Dark Chocolate; White Chocolate Amaretto; Dark Chocolate Mint; Dark Chocolate Raspberry; White Chocolate

Raspberry; Roasted Mango; Tangy Apricot; Smoked Bacon and Wild Cherry Berry.

### WINE-A-RITA

In Texas, for an evening out, the drink of choice is a margarita. Friends Judy Smith and Donna Griffin, however prefer wine to



Pickle Chips jarred pickle slices are the original product from **Texas Sassy Foods** (866/451-6728 or [www.texas-sassy.com](http://www.texas-sassy.com)) and inspired newer items like Pickle Relish, Pickle Sauce, Mustard Sauce, Vinaigrette and Salsa Marinade. **Circle No. 247**

Lemon Zest; and Creamy Milk Chocolate; and White Chocolate French Vanilla.

A recent line extension includes new bite-size Butter Wafers and Cinnamon Sugar Wafers, which are about the size of a quarter. The cookies are all-natural and preservative-free.

As for the sauces, owner Susan Walton says the inspiration comes from the great Texas tradition of barbecue.

"People in Texas entertain a lot and barbecue is huge," says Walton. "It's great for our sauces. You can cook or grill with them or you can pour them over cream cheese for an easy appetizer. The raspberry flavor is fabulous over cheesecake or ice cream."

Flavors include: Roasted

margaritas and wanted to create a fun drink that would blend the two. That's how they came up with the concept for their company Wine Glacé (903/832-7309), which features a Wine-a-Rita mix.

"In Texas, it's hot so much of the year that we really wanted to find a great way to drink frozen wine," says Smith.

To create the drink, all you need is a blender, ice and your favorite wine; it works with anything from a red Merlot or White Zinfandel to a sweeter tasting wine like a blackberry, raspberry or exotic fruit wine. Wine Glacé may also be mixed with non-alcoholic wine or fruit juice.

"It's a pretty unique product and we've gotten a lot of interest from restaurants," says Smith. ©