

specialty industry
TASTE UNLIMITED OWNER
HELPS JUDGE AWARDS

The co-owner of gourmet food chain Taste Unlimited was the only Virginian among 10 judges who chose the finalists for the 2011 Sofi Awards.

Peter Pruden III, who owns Taste Unlimited with his son, spent three days in New York tasting a record 1,657 food and beverage entries for the award, given by the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade and considered the Oscars of that industry.

Pruden and his fellow judges narrowed the group to finalists in each of 31 categories that will be presented at the association's Fancy Food Show in mid-July in Washington. Show attendees will vote on the finalists to determine the winners.

Among the foods chosen for the finals was Blue Crab Bay Co.'s Sandbaggers in the Snack Food category. The Virginia peanuts with sea salt and cracked pepper are one of many products made by the company in Melfa, on the Eastern Shore.

The panel's other judges included Washington Post food writer Bonnie Benwick; Sara Moulton, foods contributor for ABC television's "Good Morning America"; and Dwight Richmond, a purchasing coordinator for Whole Foods Market in Austin, Texas.

Taste Unlimited, with six local food and sandwich shops, carries several of the finalists: Vosges Haut-Chocolate Black Sea Salt Caramel Bars, Savannah Bee Company Tupelo Honey, Route 11 Dill Pickle Potato Chips, and Bone Doctors' BBQ Gift Packs. Pruden also found some new favorites during his tasting that he plans to add to his shelves in coming weeks.

- Carolyn Shapiro

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