

# SPECIALTY FOOD

THE NEWS UPDATE FOR SPECIALTY FOOD PROFESSIONALS

NEWS

BY ROBYN PFORR RYAN

A look at industry happenings, store and restaurant openings, legislative and regulatory updates and more

## TWO NEW OUTLETS FOR PRESTIGIOUS CREAMERY

Valley Shepherd Creamery, Long Valley, N.J., has plans for two additional shops, in Brooklyn, N.Y., and in Philadelphia's Reading Terminal Market. They will join the existing shop in New York City's Soho district, where one of its biggest customers is chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten.

## Historic Farmers Market Gets Overhaul

Plans are underway for a \$2.6 million upgrade to Michigan's Fulton Street Farmers Market, a nearly 100-year-old facility in Grand Rapids, Mich. Improvements will include a permanent roof over the stalls and a LEED-certified green building for eight to 12 year-round vendors.

## NEW SELF-SCAN AND BAG PROGRAM

The Stop & Shop Supermarket chain, which has 75 stores throughout New England, New York and New Jersey, has launched Scan It! Mobile, an in-store handheld scanner that allows customers to use their mobile device to scan and bag their groceries while they shop.

## IN MEMORIAM: TASTE UNLIMITED'S PETER COE

Specialty food pioneer Peter Coe, founder of the Taste Unlimited chain of gourmet markets in the Hampton Bay region of Virginia, died on June 29, after a weeks-long bout with cancer.

Coe opened the first Taste Unlimited in 1973, when very few specialty food stores existed outside of the major cities. Coe later told a *Virginian-Pilot* reporter that the Virginia Hampton Roads region was "Swiss and cheddar country," but that he felt the area was ready for more. Before Taste Unlimited, Coe had a brief career in banking and the brass industry, but his true passions were food and wine. An early business venture involved selling Rock Cornish game hens to everyone in town during summer breaks in high school.

At Taste Unlimited's first shop, Coe filled his shelves with fine wines and specialty food pantry items and cheeses. Later he added in fresh-baked bread and an upscale menu of takeout soups, sandwiches and salads. The store became known for offering distinctive products such as fresh parmesan, homemade peanut butters and ethnic delicacies, which people couldn't find elsewhere at the time.

The store eventually expanded from Virginia Beach to Norfolk and today comprises six stores. In 2006, Coe sold Taste Unlimited to Jon and Peter Pruden, but remained active with the market as its cheese and wine buyer and teaching cooking classes and leading wine tastings.

"He was well-respected. He acted as an ambassador for specialty foods in Virginia," says Ron Tanner, vice president, communications, education, government & industry relations for the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade (NASFT). Coe was a longtime member of NASFT and a prominent member of the Retailer Network Council. "He loved talking to retailers. Peter was a leader in the industry in general, but also was a leader among small specialty food stores. He showed how a small store could do well and succeed," Tanner adds.

Beyond his work for his stores, Coe acted as a catalyst for bringing producers of Virginia-made foods together to market their goods around the world. In the mid-1980s, he approached the state's commissioner of agriculture and successfully pressed for a delegation of staffers to attend the NASFT Fancy Food Show in New York City.

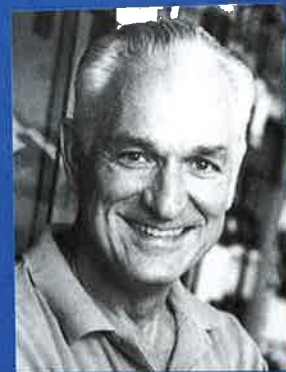
"It was his introduction that has gotten us to where we are today—the largest state pavilion to have exhibited at the 2011 Summer Fancy Food Show in July," says Lisa Lafoon Lloyd, a promotion specialist with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Coe was tireless in his advocacy of Virginia specialty foods and his love of food. Pam Barefoot, founder of the Blue Crab Bay Co./Bay Beyond Inc., Melfa, Va., says Coe helped her grow her company from a home-based business selling directly to consumers to her current flourishing wholesale business. In 1984, Barefoot had only ever sold her Clam and Crab Dip Blends directly to consumers. She got a call from Coe about whether she could sell wholesale, and Taste Unlimited became her first major account.

"He was the person who changed the scope of my business in the early days," says Barefoot. "He had quite an impact on me. He was very supportive of the Virginia specialty food industry."

When she had her first tasting in his Taste Unlimited shop she began unpacking her Seafood Grilling Sauce and some crackers for sampling. Coe, she recalls, shook his head, saying, "No, we're going to do this right." Within half an hour, he was helping her set up her tasting with fresh tuna they then grilled and dipped in the sauce.

"I was impressed," says Barefoot. "He was a truly fine gentleman, a class act who did everything right."



COURTESY OF TASTE UNLIMITED