BARBECUE POTATO CHIPS 12
BLACK WALNUTS 13
BOILED PEANUTS 14
CHEESE CRACKERS 15
CHEESE STRAWS 16
CORN CHIPS 17
CRACKLINGS (FRIED PORK RINDS) 18
MACADAMIA NUTS 19
OLIVES 20
PECANS 21
PISTACHIOS 22
POPcorn 23
The first olive trees in California were planted in 1769 by Franciscan priests at the Mission of San Diego de Alcalá, in what is now San Diego. They turned out to be very well suited to the local climate, and quickly spread north. By 1892, when the entrepreneurially minded C. C. Graber headed west from Clay City, Indiana, to Ontario, due east of Los Angeles, they were thriving in much of Southern California. Graber may have had thoughts of farming citrus, but he sampled cured olives made by his neighbors and liked them well enough to try to figure out how to make his own, and make them better.

He planted olive trees and went into business in 1894, and his family still farms and packs olives today. In 1963, the Graber olive groves were moved north to Lindsay, in the San Joaquin Valley, but the olives are still packed in Graber's original hometown. The Grabers grow two of the earliest California varieties, Manzanillos and Missions. Hand-picked, they are cured and packed without artificial treatment. California black olives are oxidized to that color; Grabers retain their natural hue, a color that must be described as, well, olive—sort of a yellowish-brownish green. They are rich in flavor, with a silky texture and a nutty flavor that seems purely, elementally olive. They’re quite possibly the tastiest of all California olives—and the surprising thing is that they’re sold not in bulk or in glass jars, but in cans.

According to an old joke, a proper Bostonian once asked a Texan if he called these native American nuts “PEE-kans” or “puh-KAWNS.” “Well, ma’am,” the Texan replied, “where I come from, puh-KAWNS grow in the front yard, and the PEE-kan’s out back.” Ba-dum-dum.

The pecan tree is a native of North America, growing wild particularly in the southern Midwest, the South, and parts of Mexico. Related to the hickory, it takes its English name from the term pacane, an interpretation by French explorers of the Cree word pakan, meaning a hard-shelled nut. Though Americans have enjoyed the fruit of the pecan tree for centuries (and Thomas Jefferson propagated pecans at Monticello), it wasn’t cultivated commercially until around 1880. The nut is grown today in parts of South America, South Africa, Australia, and China, but most of those eaten in the U.S. come from Georgia or Texas.

Pearson Farm in Crawford County, in west-central Georgia, is a fifth-generation family-run enterprise best known for its peaches and its pecans. Al Pearson and his sisters, Ann and Peggy, took over the farm from their parents in 1973. In 2008, the sisters retired and Al’s son, Lawton, came into the business. The Pearsons grow two varieties of pecans, Desirable and Elliott. I actually find the latter more, well, desirable; they’re a little smaller, though still meaty, and may be slightly sweeter than the Desirables.

Just as an aside, since it’s a different kind of product altogether, I’m also very fond of Oren’s Kitchen Smoked Paprika Pecans, made in El Cerrito, California, just north of Berkeley. I don’t know where proprietor Arnon Oren gets his nuts, or what variety they are, but he slow-roasts them with sea salt and Spanish pimentón (paprika), and they are mighty good.
Sheep’s Milk Yogurt

The first time I visited the Old Chatham Shepherding Company—in Columbia County, New York, southeast of Albany, between the Hudson River and the Berkshire Mountains—it was a tiny country inn with an excellent restaurant and a barn full of sheep on the side. The owners of the bucolic 600-acre (240-hectare) property, Tom and Nancy Clark, closed the inn and restaurant in 1999 to concentrate on the sheep and specifically on making cheese and yogurt from their milk. They now tend more than a thousand East Friesian purebred and crossbred ewes, and claim to have the largest sheep dairy farm in America.

Sheep have fascinated Tom Clark ever since he won a blue ribbon for his Hampshire sheep at the Dutchess County Fair as a ten-year-old rural New York farmboy. He and Nancy are directly involved in every aspect of their operation. Their fields are organically managed, and their animals are raised without growth hormones and receive antibiotics only if they’re ill. The Old Chatham staff of five employees and one border collie (Reggio) work seven days a week, between three and four hundred ewes are milked twice daily, and the milk is processed in state-of-the-art facilities. Sheep’s milk is higher in calcium, protein, vitamins, and zinc than cow’s milk, and it is more easily digested as well. It also converts splendidly into more complex products.

Old Chatham’s cheeses are excellent (their Camembert is particularly good), but their yogurt is unparalleled. It is made solely from pasteurized sheep’s milk and active cultures, with no stabilizers or thickeners added. There are several flavored varieties, including one with pure maple syrup added and another accented with crystallized ginger. The plain version, though, is so full of flavor, with an appealing creamy richness and a tangy sour bite, that variations, however good, seem beside the point.

Strong Blue Cheese

Maytag Blue—yes, that Maytag. The washing machine folks. At least, the same family. In 1941, in Newton, Iowa, the original home of the Maytag Corporation, two young men named Fred and Robert Maytag—grandsons of the appliance company’s founder, Frederick Louis Maytag I—began producing this cheese, using milk from a herd of award-winning dairy cows kept by their father, E. H. Maytag. (They later inherited the dairy from him.)

The Maytag brothers were inspired to undertake their project when they learned that, several years earlier, a couple of microbiologists at Iowa State University had developed a new technique for making blue cheese. The researchers had long been attempting to make an American version of France’s esteemed Roquefort—one of the world’s great blue cheeses, based on sheep’s milk—and had developed a way to produce what they believed was a similar product from homogenized cow’s milk. (Among other things, they added an increased amount of rennet—the coagulating agent in most cheese—and ramped up the temperature at which the milk was allowed to set.) Maytag Blue turned out to be very different in flavor, consistency, and even color from Roquefort, but it became an American classic—and while there is plenty of competition these days (see, for example, page 60), it is certainly a blue cheese worth mentioning alongside just about anything in that category made anywhere else in the world.

As with Roquefort, Maytag Blue—before it becomes blue cheese—is inoculated with Penicillium mold, then aged in cool, damp chambers, where the mold spreads throughout the cheese, giving it its blue-green veins. Though the Maytag dairy no longer maintains its own milk cows, it does buy fresh milk from farmers in the surrounding area, and the cheese is still made the way it was at first: by hand, in small batches. It is a creamy rather than crumbly blue, and has a forthright, tangy flavor, though it is not as mouth-puckeringly intense as some blue cheeses. It goes very nicely with, among other things, full-flavored beer—for instance, Liberty Ale, from San Francisco-based Anchor Brewing, headed until his recent retirement by Maytag Blue co-founder Fred Maytag’s son, Fritz.
DUNGENESS CRAB

This superbly tasty creature is named for Dungeness Bay, at the top of the Olympic Peninsula in upstate Washington, and is the official state crustacean of Oregon, but as a native Californian I can’t help associating it with my home state and specifically with the place where I first encountered it: Fisherman’s Wharf in San Francisco. There, at least when I was younger (I haven’t been for a while), the big seafood restaurants that line Jefferson Street and other nearby thoroughfares all had sidewalk stands where you could buy a cardboard container full of Dungeness crabmeat, with cocktail sauce, to eat while you strolled along the piers.

Dungeness, which in fact is harvested all the way from the Aleutian Islands to California’s Central Coast, is a delicately flavored crab, with meaty, sweet, faintly salty, faintly coppery flesh and a clean sea-bright finish. (The shells, I’ve learned, also make first-rate seafood stock.) One of the best restaurant appetizers of my life was served at the tame but well-provisioned bachelor party of a good friend of mine, years back: an entire steamed Dungeness crab for each diner, served with nothing more than lemon wedges and the appropriate implements. Hardly a word was spoken as we all dug into this great treat.

Among the merchants who will ship Dungeness crab, both live and cooked (and in the form of extracted meat, though that takes away half the fun), is i love blue sea, a San Francisco-based company that bills itself as the only online source for 100 percent sustainable seafood. Its founder, Martin Reed, says that it wasn’t until he left his native Northern California for college in Tucson that he realized how little good fresh fish and shellfish was available to most of the country. When he looked into sources of seafood supply, he learned for the first time about endangered species and various ecological threats to the quality of Pacific waters. He had been an avid surfer, and when he returned to San Francisco, he and a fellow surfer, Matt Carreira, decided to start a company that would sell fish and shellfish of the highest quality, but only from sustainable fisheries. The company works closely with Seafood Watch as well as the Monterey Bay Aquarium to help promote sustainable species; luckily, the Dungeness crab is on the list.
I was sitting at the Brasserie Lipp on the Boulevard Saint-Germain in Paris one day some years ago when an American couple sitting next to me, who had just been served their food, started laughing. I looked over and immediately guessed what had happened: Thinking that it was some exotic local variety of charcuterie, they must have ordered saucisse de Francfort—because on each of their plates, unadorned, were two long hot dogs.

Well, they may have been seasoned slightly differently from an American dog, but they were more or less identical. This isn’t surprising when you remember that the old-fashioned name for hot dogs in this country was frankfurters. Indeed, most authorities agree that the hot dog’s ancestor was a pork sausage served in a roll that had been known for centuries in Frankfurt, Germany. As to who brought it to the U.S. and adapted it into its present form, there is much disagreement.

A German immigrant named Charles Feltman sold sausages in rolls on Coney Island in the early 1870s. In St. Louis, it is maintained that they were first introduced to America at a street stand in 1880. They were also seen at the World’s Columbian Exposition, as the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893 was officially known. A few years later, a vendor at the New York Polo Grounds sold sausages in-buns that he dubbed “dachshund sandwiches” for their shape. This might be the origin of the term “hot dog.” In 1916, Nathan Handwerker, who had worked for Charles Feltman on Coney Island, went on his own and started what was to become Nathan’s Famous, possibly the best-known hot-dog purveyor of all.

A good hot dog pops a little when you bite into it, lacks gristle or bits of bone, has recognizable pork flavor, is properly seasoned with salt and pepper (with a hint of garlic), contains no fillers, and is juicy enough that a little of its flavor soaks into the bun. This is a pretty good description of the dogs made by Liehs & Steigerwald in Syracuse, New York. An old-style meat shop, specializing in sausages of many kinds, it was opened in 1936 by German immigrants Curt Liehs and Ludwig Steigerwald. Liehs’s son, Curt Jr., assumed control of the shop in the 1980s. Today it is owned by Jeffrey Steigerwald, Bob’s son, in partnership with Chuck Madonna, who started working at the shop when he was fifteen. They promise to preserve the shop’s food traditions while modernizing the business, and so far, at least judging from their hot dogs, they’re doing a good job.

For no particularly good reason, given my white-bread ethnic background and my parents’ extremely conventional tastes in food, I grew up loving liverwurst. Liverwurst is an anglicization of Leberwurst, a German word that literally means “liver sausage,” and under either name it’s a semi-soft, spreadable sausage traditionally made with at least a small percentage of strong-tasting pork liver along with pork and/or other meats and a blend of spices.

I’m perfectly happy eating supermarket liverwurst, but by far the best and most unusual interpretation of this traditional pork product comes from, of all places, a microbrewery in North Carolina. Actually, Weeping Radish Farm Brewery—the oldest microbrewery in the state, located in Jarvisburg, between Norfolk, Virginia, and the Carolinian barrier islands known as the Outer Banks—is rather more than just a place that makes beer. It’s also a pub-style restaurant, a vegetable farm selling retail to the public, a shop featuring North Carolina food products, and a first-rate butcher shop.

The operation was launched by German-born Uli Bennewitz, who came to the United States as an agribusiness executive but who, he says, “got suckered into opening a craft brewery” by his brother in the mid-1980s. Little by little, he expanded, moving from a dry town nearby to his present 24-acre (10-hectare) property. Weeping Radish meats and charcuterie—nitrate-free and based on animals sourced from area farms—are the preserve of another German, butcher Frank Meusel, and his masterpiece, at least to me, is his “liver pâté with a Southern flair.” This is liverwurst made not just with pork and pork liver but sweetened with a touch of sweet potato. The effect is brilliant: a mouth-filling concentration of flavors neither sugary nor livery, but just right.
Ramps

It has long been said that the name of the great city of Chicago comes from a Native American term (variously rendered as shikaakwa or sheka:ko:heki), meaning a place where wild garlic or onions grow. Research done in the 1990s, however, suggests that the fragrant plant that once flourished where the city was founded was neither, but rather allium tricoccum, known to us as the ramson or, more commonly, the ramp.

Ramps are a kind of wild leek, found growing all over Appalachia and up into Canada. Unlike their cultivated cousin, they have veined, tapered green leaves, which are good to eat when they’re young, descending to purple stems with a small scallion-like bulb at the end. They’re extremely pungent, with an intense garlicky flavor; everybody quotes the Ohio food writer Jane Snow, who thought they tasted like “fried green onions with a dash of funky feet.” Suffice to say that with ramps, a little goes a long way. Most people chop them up and stir them into eggs or vegetables or else pickle them for use as a condiment, and only the brave (or anti-social) eat them plain or in abundance. Because they have a short season, usually beginning around early April, ramps are known as a harbinger of spring, and many communities, especially in West Virginia and Tennessee, hold annual ramp festivals.

Once known mostly in rural areas, ramps have become, in recent years, a trendy addition to contemporary American menus around the country. Time magazine’s food writer, Josh Ozersky, calls them “the new arugula,” and suggests that their recent popularity is based on cultural rather than culinary values. I’m not sure there’s anything wrong with that, and in any case ramps do have a unique intensity of flavor that isn’t quite the same as that of garlic, much less of leeks.

Glen and Noreen Facemire operate what they are pretty sure is the only ramp farm in the world (G–N Ramp Farm), on the South Fork of the Cherry River in Richwood, West Virginia. They sell freshly harvested ramps in season, as well as ramp seeds and bulbs, and even a book on the subject.

Ruby Red Grapefruit

There’s something about red-fleshed citrus fruit: blood oranges seem both sweeter and sharper, and certainly more elegant, than their conventionally hued kin. Red-fleshed Texas grapefruit seem to me to have a lusciousness and flavor unparalleled by any other variety. Maybe (in both cases) I’m being seduced by appearances; red is racy, romantic. But I’m convinced that both are something special. Blood oranges thrive in Spain and Italy, and while they are grown in the U.S., they never seem to reach the intensity of flavor attained in southern Europe. Red grapefruit, on the other hand, are a Texas treasure.

In the late 1920s, a citrus farmer in the Lone Star State found a grapefruit with dark red meat growing on a pink grapefruit tree. He recognized its value (and possibly its superior flavor), cultivated it, and patented the variety in 1929. Some sources suggest that it wasn’t until this new kind of fruit, called Ruby Red, hit the market that grapefruit of all kinds became truly popular in America.

The subtropical climate in south Texas, where most of the state’s citrus crops are grown, is ideal for red grapefruit. Freezes in 1949, 1951, and 1962 destroyed the white and pink grapefruit crop in the region, but the reds continued to thrive.

Grapefruit that are darker in color and (perhaps) more deeply flavored than Ruby Reds have been developed since the appearance of that first red variety. One popular variation, the Star Ruby, appeared in 1970. In 1984, Dr. Richard Henz, a researcher at the Texas A&I Citrus Center in Kingsville (now a part of the Texas A&M system) used ionizing radiation to produce the reddest possible version, called the Rio Red. I doubt that I could tell the difference between one variety and another by taste, though I think I might be able to distinguish red from white grapefruit blindfolded. Anyway, a good red Texas grapefruit tastes wonderfully citrusy, with a nice balance of tart and sweet. I love scooping it right out of the skin with a grapefruit spoon. Red Cooper, from Alamo, Texas, is one of many growers who ship Ruby Reds. Also recommended: Texas red grapefruit juice and tequila in a tall ice-filled glass with salt on the rim.
CHOCOLATE MARSHMALLOWS

Marshmallow creme, also known under the trade name Marshmallow Fluff, is a spreadable paste that resembles the softened interior of marshmallows. It was apparently originally used around the turn of the nineteenth century as a cake filling. The first commercially produced version of the substance appeared as a cake filling. The first commercially produced version of the substance appeared in 1917, and before long it had found a role as an oversize snack, it had become a popular quick lunch for miners and other manual laborers—often washed down with an RC Cola. The country singer “Big Bill” Lister, who toured for several years as the opening act for Hank Williams, even had a hit in 1951 with a song called “Gimme an RC Cola and a Moon Pie.” The specialty’s Tennessee origins aside, Alabama has embraced the MoonPie, with an annual MoonPie eating contest in Bessemer and a lighted reproduction of one, 12 feet (about 3.5 meters) high, raised each New Year’s Eve in Mobile. MoonPies are also thrown from carnival floats during Mobile’s large and frenetic Mardi Gras parade every year.

What does a MoonPie taste like? It’s sort of like a fossilized s’more. Imagine the wheat-and-honey flavor of graham crackers combined with sweet, gooey cream and slightly waxy chocolate of no particular distinction—not exactly, in other words, an epicurean treat, but undeniably a real American tradition.

CHOCOLATE MICE

These little creatures, handcrafted by L.A. Burdick, are almost too cute to eat: tiny, benevolent-looking rodents, short and plump, with upturned noses, chocolate-coated almond ears, candy dots for eyes, and long silk ribbon tails in different hues. But they’re also far too good not to eat. They come in three flavors: white chocolate with a cinnamon-flavored interior, milk chocolate with mocha inside, and (my favorite) dark chocolate cloaking an intense orange center. Larry Burdick, who runs L. A. Burdick with his wife, Paula, got the idea for the mice when he was studying chocolate-making in Switzerland.

One chocolate shop he worked at, in Bern, had the tradition of forming leftover chocolate scraps into inexpensive candies for children, and somebody had the idea of shaping these into mice with scraps of knitting yarn pasted on (with chocolate) as tails.

Back in the U.S., in the mid-1980s, Burdick started making artisanal chocolates of his own for restaurants and caterers in New York City, and he remembered the mice and began fashioning them. They scampered on to become something of a trademark for him. His business slowly grew, and he moved his chocolate factory and his family to Walpole, a small town in southwestern New Hampshire.

All Burdick chocolates are made in small batches. No molds are used: the chocolates are all piped and formed by hand. He uses rich, high-quality couverture chocolate (containing extra cocoa butter, at least 32 percent) from Switzerland, France, and Venezuela, made primarily from Caribbean and South and Central American cocoa beans. In addition to the mice, Burdick produces chocolate penguins, Easter bunnies, Thanksgiving turkeys, even ghosts in coffins for Hallowe’en—as well as a range of bonbons in more conventional form. There’s something about those mice, though...
CONDIMENTS

BARBECUE SAUCE 234
BEACH PLUM JELLY 235
BOILED CIDER 236
BREAD AND BUTTER PICKLES 237
CAESAR DRESSING 238
CASHEW BUTTER 239
CONSERVES 240
CREAMED HONEY 241
HONEY 242
HOT SAUCE 243
JALAPEÑO JELLY 244
KETCHUP 245
MAPLE SYRUP 246
MAYHAW JELLY 247
MAYONNAISE 248
MISO 249
MUSTARD 250
OLIVE OIL 251
ORANGE MARMALADE 252
PEANUT BUTTER 253
PICKLED GHOST PEPPERS 254
RANCH DRESSING 255
SALSA 256
SEA SALT 257
SEASONING MIX 258
SORGHUM SYRUP 259
SPIEDIE MARINADE 260
SRIRACHA SAUCE 261
I love barbecue sauce, but not on barbecue. I’m a purist when it comes to pit-smoked meats, that is. I like Texas brisket seasoned with nothing more than salt and smoke; I like North Carolina pulled pork glistening with apple cider vinegar and dusted with black pepper. That’s about it. By “barbecue sauce,” I mean a mixture of sweet, acidic, and spicy ingredients, typically including (in various ratios and combinations) ketchup, vinegar, sugar and/or molasses, garlic, mustard, black pepper, chile powder or flakes, cayenne, and various other spices, sometimes with a little fruit blended in just for fun. I think of it as a tasty condiment for burgers, roast chicken, and a few other things (and I like it as a flavoring; see page 12), but I don’t like it messing with the smoke.

Supermarket brands of barbecue sauce are just fine with me. The first of these went on the market back in the early 1900s, under the Georgia Barbecue Sauce Company label. Heinz entered the competition in 1940. My go-to standard, KC Masterpiece, was initially concocted in 1978 by a Kansas City physician and amateur barbecue pitmaster named Rich Davis. (The brand was later spun off into a chain of restaurants, now closed, and has been owned for some years by a division of the Clorox Company.)

The commercial barbecue sauce I like the best right now, however, is Pine Ridge BBQ and Dipping Sauce, made by Herbadashery—a “retirement project” started in 1991 by Barb and Eli Dicklich in Casper, Wyoming, that now includes a catering operation and lines of yard decorations, plants, and garden supplies as well as Pine Ridge products. The story is that a woman named Melissa Armstrong, living on the 28,500-acre (11,500-hectare) Pine Ridge Ranch in Kaycee, about 60 miles (96 kilometers) north of Casper, ran out of the brand-name barbecue sauce her family liked when she was preparing dinner one evening, so she improvised her own. They liked it even better, and she started making it for sale. In 2006, she sold the recipe and name to the Dicklichs, and I’m happy to say that it is now available outside the immediate area. It’s not a goopy, ketchup-texture sauce. It flows nicely, isn’t overly sweet, has a nice chile bite, and is lively enough to perk up anything it touches. I’ve even let a few drops fall on raw oysters.

The beach plum, *Prunus maritima*, grows in sand dunes and salty coastal soil from Maine to Maryland. First identified in 1785, it is considered an almost heraldic New England fruit, evocative of summer cottages and seaside strolls. Both Plum Island, Massachusetts, and Plum Island, New York, are named after it. Cold-resistant and hardy, the beach plum can be successfully cultivated, but in its wild form, it is being crowded out of its natural habitat by development in many areas. I used to buy beach plums occasionally in August and September at farmstands in eastern Long Island and on Cape Cod, but have seen them less and less in recent years, and they are all but unknown in supermarkets. Residents of and regular summer visitors to portions of Long Island and the New England coast sometimes know where to find beach plums growing, but they tend to be as protective of their secret source spots as any mushroom hunter or trout fisherman is of his or hers.

Beach plums, small and purplish-blue, aren’t unpleasant to eat right off the bush—they taste much like so-called Italian prune plums, with a more pronounced tartness—but they’re better in the form of jam or jelly. Beach plum jelly, in fact, has long been a staple of home canning in coastal New England, and there are a number of small-scale commercial brands available. (In the early twentieth century, when the fruit was still abundant in the wild, Ocean Spray, the big cranberry packers, used to produce it.) A number of shops on the Massachusetts coast and elsewhere in the region sell beach plum jelly, much of it produced by the same manufacturer. Cold Hollow Cider Mill in Waterbury, Vermont, a hundred miles or more from the nearest ocean beach—a well-known cider producer owned by descendants of Thomas Chittenden, the state’s first governor—makes their own excellent example from scratch in a jelly room near their property’s original nineteenth-century barn.

A very simple product, beach plum jelly contains nothing more than juice of the fruit, pectin, and sugar. If it’s well made, it has a smooth, cohesive texture, with neither flecks of fruit nor liquid pooling in the jar, and is intensely fruity, with a pleasant, puckery bite. Spread on toast with a little unsalted butter, it tastes like summer at the shore.
The Taste of America

**BOILED CIDER**

When Willis Wood’s ancestors set up Wood’s Cider Mill between Weathersfield and Springfield, in southeastern Vermont, back in 1882, on land the Woods had first settled in 1798, their twin-screw cider press was powered by a water mill. Today, it’s run by hand and electricity—but it’s the same old-fashioned, indestructible press, capable of turning out about 200 gallons (a little more than 750 liters) of cider at a run. Willis Wood’s father grew up on the farm, but left to study engineering and to work in Boston, where Willis was brought up. As a child and young man, though, he continued to visit the family farm, and learned how to make apple cider, maple syrup, and other traditional products. In the 1980s, he and his wife, Tina, bought the property from a cousin of Willis’s great-grandfather, and have operated it ever since, installing their ancient press in a new sugarhouse and cider mill in 2003.

They make excellent cider (including an unpasteurized version which, by law, can be sold only on the farm) and maple syrup, cider jelly, and a once common but now rare old-style condiment called boiled cider. Like cider jelly, boiled cider is a product that has been made and enjoyed in New England since colonial times. Both fell out of fashion as tastes changed, and their production pretty much died out in the twentieth century. Wood’s has never stopped making either one. Because both are completely natural, with no added ingredients, they are starting to become popular again with customers who appreciate authentic artisanal products.

Boiled cider starts with apples, primarily McIntosh, some grown on the Woods’ farm and some purchased from neighbors, that are pressed into juice. Then they’re reduced to a thick syrup in a wood-fired stainless steel evaporator. The result is not overly sweet, but is so intensely apple-like in flavor that it tastes like the soul of the fruit. Boiled cider, which was also once known as “apple molasses,” was a great favorite of Shaker cooks, known for their straightforward food traditions. They used it in pies and to add extra flavor to applesauce. It also makes a good glaze for pork or chicken, and can be poured onto ice cream or pancakes to nice effect.

**BREAD AND BUTTER PICKLES**

Bread and butter pickles are similar to dill pickles—cucumbers pickled in brine—but sweeter in flavor (the brine has sugar added to it). They are also usually sliced before pickling, which can lend them a more intense flavor. While dill pickles, usually brined whole, are a classic garnish for deli sandwiches and other goods, these are the ones that usually get put inside the sandwiches or chopped up in potato salad, tuna salad, and similar deli-case specialties. All the big national pickle-makers have a version of these, but the best are quite possibly those labeled as Hunn’s Private Stock Bread & Butter Chips, produced in Garland, Texas, just outside Dallas.

Pat Hunn spent his career in the condiment business, packaging pickles and similar items under the Hunn’s Private Stock label. In 2006, his association with the packing plant that he’d been using ended and he started looking around for someone else to take over the work. He approached another Dallas-area firm, the Goldin Pickle Company, established in 1923, which had become one of the country’s leading manufacturers of pickle relish for institutional catering. At first, he was simply going to contract Goldin to pack his pickles, but then the two enterprises discussed a merger. Hunn ultimately purchased Goldin, and renamed it First Place Foods, which is now the parent company of the Hunn’s Private Stock brand.

In addition to their sweetness, and to the crisp texture and vinegary tang you’d expect from pickles, Hunn’s “chips” have an attractive aromatic flavor—garlic, cloves, mustard seed—that perks up sandwiches, and anything else to which they’re added, superbly.