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## [Natural Products Expo 2011, Part 2: Ancient Grains, Vegan Fare and More](#)

By Alison Ashton



Last week, I reported on the overall vibe at the [Natural Products Expo West](#), which included plenty of buzz about GMOs. This week, I want to share some of the cool stuff I spotted on the expo floor that (hopefully) will come to a store near you soon. These are just the highlights!



Ancient

## Grains for Modern Diets

Whole-grain goodness is a linchpin of healthy eating. But as I strolled the expo floor, it was clear that ancient grains were it's at. The South American grain [quinoa](#) has come of age, and protein- and nutrient-packed ancient forms of wheat are the next big thing.

Quinoa was in everything, from cereal to quick-cooking whole-grain blends (from [Village Harvest](#) and [truRoots](#), to name just two). I even found quinoa-enhanced chocolate (Alter Eco's [Dark Chocolate Quinoa Midnight Madness](#) bar).

Jovial offers pastas and cookies made with [einkorn](#), an ancient form of wheat that's high in protein and B vitamins. We're big fans of Jovial's einkorn pasta, which is full-flavored and hearty. Their new Italian-made [einkorn cookies](#) are surprisingly delicate and will change the way you think about whole wheat baked goods.

I also had a chance to sit down with Bob Quinn, founder of [Kamut Khorosan](#), an ancient form of wheat originally from Egypt. Quinn grows the wheat in Montana, and most of it is exported to Italy, where it's used to make pasta. But Kamut, which Quinn touts as "King Tut's wheat," is catching on in the States in everything from flour to pasta to whole wheat berries.

## Vegan for All

I'm not vegan myself, but I can get behind the idea of a plant-centered diet, so I was eager to check out some of the vegan fare at the expo. This year, I found vegan food that appeals to all palates.

My big gripe with vegan "cheese" has been with the flavor (often not even close to the real thing) and texture (many vegan cheeses have a disconcerting tendency to coat the mouth). A vegan friend has been encouraging me to try out [Daiya](#) vegan cheese. Last week, I did, and found it a big improvement over vegan cheese I've had in the past. Daiya's cheddar- and mozzarella-style shreds are made from

tapioca and have a nice mouthfeel and good melting quality. No, they won't replace a Neal's Yard Cheddar or buffalo mozzarella, but you could use them to bust out a decent mac 'n' cheese.

I also swung by the [Earth Balance](#) booth to check out their forthcoming (this summer) line of vegan MindfulMayo line. Now, I love a [homemade mayo](#), but I'd also happily use their Olive Oil Mayonnaise in a tuna salad or on a sandwich.

## Goin' Coconuts

Walking the expo aisles, one would be forgiven for thinking the world has gone coconuts. There were booths with coconut water, coconut oil, coconut spreads, coconut butter, coconut ice cream, coconut milk, coconut syrup and coconut sugar.

Why? Although coconut's fat is saturated, it's a beneficial kind that has an anti-inflammatory, antibacterial effect. And because it's a plant-based fat, its saturated fat is supposed to be better absorbed by the body than animal fat.

Coconut can be a pricey ingredient, so I was curious to sample Earth Balance's Organic Coconut Spread (also due out this summer), which will have a lower price point but also can be used for baking and other dishes.

But the coconut item that most intrigued me was Coconut World's [Coconut Sugar](#). Imagine brown sugar with the lighter texture of granulated sugar, but with a lower glycemic index (so it's absorbed more slowly into the blood) and much higher in potassium.

## Better Packaging

Reducing our packaging footprint was a big theme, and manufacturers were looking for ways to go beyond recyclable. Just one example: [Boulder Canyon Natural Foods](#) kettle chips in a compostable bag (yes, the chips are good, too).

There also were lots of reusable water bottles, containers and napkins. [Eco Lunchbox](#) showed off sleek and chic stainless-steel containers paired with gorgeous handmade, fair-trade fabric lunch bags and napkins. Still trying to break the plastic baggie habit? Try [LunchSkins](#)' reusable BPA- and phthalate-free baggies with Velcro closures, which you can toss into the dishwasher.

J'aime

Inscription pour voir ce que vos amis aiment.

## Baked Ancient Grain Fusilli with Veggie-Laden Marinara



*One way to enjoy protein-rich ancient grains is in pasta. Kamut and Jovial einkorn are ancient forms of non-hybridized wheat. Another ancient grain that finds its way into pasta is [quinoa](#). Experiment with different varieties: Kamut has a mild flavor and texture that's pretty darned close to regular pasta (making it a good choice for whole-grain pasta newbies). Jovial einkorn is a bit heartier, while quinoa falls somewhere in between. I used fusilli here, but penne or elbow macaroni would work just as well. Because this is made with our veggie-packed marinara sauce, it's a kid-friendly dish for little ones who are reluctant to eat their veggies.*



8 ounces whole-grain

fusilli (such as Kamut, Jovial einkorn, or quinoa)  
4 ounces chicken Italian sausage (hot or mild, you choose)  
1-1/2 cups [Kelly's "Sneaky" Veggie-Laden Marinara Sauce](#)  
3/4 cup shredded mozzarella cheese  
1/3 cup part-skim ricotta cheese  
1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons shredded pecorino Romano cheese, divided

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.

Cook pasta in boiling salted water according to package directions. Drain, and return to the pot you used to cook it.

While the pasta cooks, remove the sausage from its casing and cook in a skillet over medium heat for 5 minutes or until browned. Use a spoon to break it up.

Add sausage, sauce, mozzarella, ricotta and 1/4 cup pecorino to hot cooked pasta, stirring to combine. Spoon mixture into a greased 1-1/2-quart baking dish (a deep-dish pie plate is ideal for this). Sprinkle with remaining 2 tablespoons pecorino. Bake at 400 F for 15 minutes or until heated through.

*Serves 6*

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[Baked Ancient Grain Fusilli with Veggie-Laden Marinara](#)



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