

ORGANIC EXPO

Major food trend spotted

By **BONNIE S. BENWICK**
 The Washington Post

The major food trend at last weekend's Natural Products Expo East show in Baltimore was easy to spot, even though thousands of organic items were vying for attention. It wasn't something that people were spearing with toothpicks. The trend was in fresh pet food.

Companies that make it believe they're on the verge of big sales, due in no small part to this year's pet-food recall concerns. "It may take some retraining on the part of grocers to find a place for fresh pet food on the refrigerated aisle," said Cathal Walsh, chief operating officer of Freshpet, based in Seacacus, N.J. "But other countries are well on their way. Fresh pet food accounts for 20 percent of the Australian market."

For humans, the new food and drink items to watch out for included: more sugar substitutes made with erythritol, which is derived from sugar alcohol and is not

as sweet as other substitutes; new soybean oil from Iowa; "supercharged" dried-fruit snacks with antioxidants and omega 3-6-9, called Fruitaceuticals; and ketchup made with agave nectar (www.wholemato.com) and packaged in glass instead of plastic.

Here are three from the show that we liked:

■ **Crayons All Natural Fruit Juice Drinks** – In late summer, the Bellevue, Wash., company pioneered a blend of natural ingredients called SugarGuard that helps control the rate of sugar absorption in the body, with the goal of moderating sugar spikes. Sweeteners used are pure cane sugar and erythritol. An eight-ounce serving of the drinks contains 90 calories and vitamins A, C, D and E, plus fiber and calcium. We tried the Outrageous Orange Mango and Wild Watermelon & Berries flavors (of five flavors total); they were pleasant and not too sweet. For more information, go to www.drinkcrayons.com.

■ **HimalaSalt** – This product was a finalist in the expo's "Green" category. Produced and distributed by Sustainable Sourcing of Great Barrington, Mass., the high-quality pink salt is ethically sourced and artisan-harvested; the company is powered by 100 percent renewable energy. It also sells exotic organic peppercorns. The salt is sold in bags, a refillable grinder, recyclable packaging and a one-pound block with grater. The Web site, www.HimalaSalt.com, soon will have a shopping cart for direct online purchasing.

■ **Feed Granola Co.** – The small New York company launched its first three flavors (Cranberry Coconut Crunch, Blueberry Almond Crunch, Raisin Nut Crunch) of low-sugar, multi-grain granolas at the Expo East show last year. We sampled and liked Bittersweet-ness, the newest flavor with its dark chocolate pieces, which goes public next month.

