

## Better Bites, Butters Brownies, & Messy Chocolate



Photo by: Rebecca Otis

A couple weeks ago, I stopped by Austin City Hall for a holiday event hosted by Better Bites of Austin, featuring local Austin food/beverage vendors and their one-of-a-kind products. Better Bites of Austin " is a trade association for makers of local, all-natural food, the purpose of which is to develop opportunities for its members and promote healthy food in Austin," according to their website. Being a fan of Austin, and local and natural foods, I was thrilled to hear about the organization, and its mission, which closely aligns with my interests.

There were a modest number of participating vendors (maybe 15), but I was impressed with the uniqueness of each brand, the quality of each product, and loved meeting each culinary entrepreneur(ess) to discover their passions. Moreover, I am fascinated by learning about different types of businesses, and was excited to be introduced to several new local Austin brands that I will share with you below:

1) **Gourmet Texas Pasta**- Flavored whole grain pasta. What a brilliant idea! You'll never have to worry about having to add extra sauce, or an abundance of ingredients to make your pasta tasty. The flavors are part of the pasta itself, which can compliment your dish, or guide your homemade dinner menu. With flavors like Spinach Basil Garlic, Italian Herb, Lemon Pepper, Wild Mushroom, Artichoke Heart, Red Chili & Cilantro, Cabernet Sauvignon, Szechuan Orange Spice, and Chocolate Dessert Pasta, you can mix up your default didn't-have-time-for-the-grocery-store-so-we're-having-pasta dinner and it won't taste the same every time. You can stop by their store at 2013 Wells Branch Parkway #119 to try a free cooking class, or pick up some pasta. Or, order online for host/hostess gifts, or to have on hand when entertaining out of town guests, or to spice up a week night meal. Mom, I'm waiting to hear how the Lemon Pepper linguini is!

2) **Mary Louise Butters Brownies**- What would you do if you met Betty Crocker herself? I was honored to meet the local sweets living legend, Mary Louise Butters, and what an apropos name for a brownie bakeress. I've seen her soft, chewy, chocolatey goodness around town, but meeting her in person was quite the experience. As I heard her speak about her extensive portfolio of brownies, her passion for her product came out in her sweet personality, and in her decadent desserts that I tasted. You'll find unique, fresh ingredients and flavors, including beer, orange zest, Grand Marnier, Chipotle, Habanero Chili, dried blueberries, and Peppermint Schnapps. You can cut a brownie into bite-sized tastes for a sweet after-dinner treat when entertaining guests at home, or go for the gusto, and indulge all at once. They make excellent gifts, and can be ordered online to be shipped to a lucky recipient.

3) **Messy Chocolates**- I was lucky to meet Eric Oyler, Chocolatier and maker himself of his locally produced with fresh, local ingredient truffles! If you are a loyal reader, you know that I am partial to truffles, but I especially appreciate the origin of Eric's

business name. He explained that his truffles are hand-dipped, so they look more free-form (thus the name Messy), rather than made-from-a-mold. There is a kind of tasty beauty that comes out in these chocolately flaws, providing chocolate traces for indulgers to work on before biting into the truffle itself. As a truffle hand-dipper myself, I love that each truffle has its own character, and something about knowing it is personally hand-made by Eric, makes me appreciate the chocolately goodness just that much more. He makes unique flavors such as Chai, Ginger, Coconut Curry, Texas Martini, Wasabi, Cinnamon Chipotle, and Citrus Basil. Are you sold yet? Contact Eric here to taste them yourself or send as a gift!

There might be a common theme here among the local culinary vendors I ran into that day. It seems that the key to success is a local, tasty product, that comes in many different flavors...probably to keep us coming back for more! If you've tried any of these products or you decide to try them, I'd love to know what you think! Luckily, I got to taste them all, which allows me to reserve the right to "Rebeccammend" them. I'd like to know if you were as excited as I was about these new tasty gift ideas, or special treats!



Clockwise L to R: Better Bites of Austin event display, Eric Oyler displays his handmade Messy Chocolates, Mary Louise Butters holds up a box of her assorted brownies, and Melody Robinson showcases Gourmet Texas Pasta.