

Favorite New Food Products of 2008

By Diane Toops, Dave Fusaro and David Feder

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Our annual unscientific picks for the best new products of the past year.

Peas of Mind Nanna's Banana Puffets

These are too good for toddlers

A puffet is a word made up by Peas of Mind owner Jill Litwin. "The word 'casserole' just sounded hideous when applied to children's food," she says. But that's what these are: little casseroles, warm and just the right size and texture for toddler hands, "made of the four food groups and organic ingredients," Litwin continues.



They may be marketed to toddlers, but I could easily blow through an entire package of these delights in a sitting. The San Francisco company (www.peasofmind.com) is one of the best of the new boutique operations rewriting the rule book for starter foods. Puffets are real food, comforting and tasty, striking a perfect balance between flavorful and overpowering (why do so many kid foods overwhelm with garlic powder?) and with textures that work for the two-tooth crowd without feeling modified beyond identifiable.

Puffets are nutritionally balanced for their primary audience of the primary years, with not only protein and fiber but vitamins and minerals, especially iron. Some varieties are gluten- and/or dairy-free. They're for "health-conscious parents who want to feed their growing kids delicious meals with organic ingredients, but don't have the time to make them from scratch," says Litwin.

I'm not the only adult to get hooked on these made-for-munchkin munchies. Litwin says lots of parents now toss some into their own backpacks and briefcases as a healthy snack to perk up the mid-day grind.

Peas of Mind also makes five other varieties: Mamma's Pasta, Dalai Lentil, Black Bean Polenta, Eat Your Greens and Carrot Risotto. All are delicious, but the banana fritter-like ones are stunning. They're frozen and can be made in a microwave or conventional oven.

- David Feder