

P.41 SMARTWATCHES:
INTEL OR INTRUSION?

P.54 JOYCE FARMS
FOSTERS FLAVOR

P.68 WEBSTER URGES
BREAK FROM THE PAST

03.23 meetingplace.com

meetingplace®

Hollowed HALLS

Funding gaps cast doubt on the future
of collegiate meat science programs

PIE in the SKY

Photo by Getty

Aunt Ethel's newest creation receives high marks, but with some reservations.



PRODUCT:

Aunt Ethel's Roasted Chicken Pot Pie

PRICE:

\$10.20-\$12 for one 12-ounce package

PLUS:

Innovative preparation; high-quality chicken

PROBLEM:

Off-putting addition of red bell peppers; inconsistent quality

What screams comfort food more than a piping hot, homemade savory chicken pot pie? We first tasted Aunt Ethel's pot pies at a recent trade food show and were enamored with its homemade qualities, so we knew this had to be a Taste Test product for *Meatingplace*. Aunt Ethel's is a women-owned, Brooklyn-based company that created a "two-part" pot pie fresh from the microwave. The buttery puff-pastry top is toasted separately, so no soggy pot pie crust here.

Aunt Ethel's is available at retail only in NYC, but is available nationwide through their website. There are three varieties: coq au vin, lentil chili and roasted chicken. We opted for the latter, and hoped our taste testers felt the same way we did after our first taste of Aunt Ethel's product.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Tasters included singles, families and pot pie enthusiasts.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

A number of our tasters appreciated Aunt Ethel's unique preparation instructions.

"I appreciate the simplicity and convenience of microwaving the bottom and toasting the top," one taster said. "Seems like a great way to enjoy the textural nuances." Another taster shared, "Such a creative and smart idea to have the crust separate from the rest of the pot pie."

Cooking instructions are a recurring theme in Taste Tests, and this round of tasters delivered with unique insights. While one taster liked the fact that they could scan a QR code for cooking instructions, another felt there was "almost too much info on the package." Another taster added they were "not a big fan of having to open the packaging to see the cooking instructions," which are printed on the inside of the product's wrapping. And finally, a taster appreciated the package's transparency, and how the crust was visible through it.

TASTE, TEXTURE AND MORE

Many of our tasters were positive in their assessment of Aunt Ethel's chicken pot pie, especially in regards to its unique preparation.

"Toasting the top separately provided a



Food Industry Exhaust Filtration Systems



Extend The Useful Life Of Your Roof By Keeping It Clean.

- Filter grease, oil and other contaminants from exhaust air stream
- Eliminate grease and oil accumulation on roof
- Three stage filtration:
 - Centrifugal
 - Wet Scrubber
 - Demister Pad Filter
- No moving components, easy to maintain
- 99% efficient for particles 5 micron and greater
- 80% efficient for 3 micron particulate
- All stainless construction
- New, improved Water Recirculation System available to reduce water consumption and operating costs

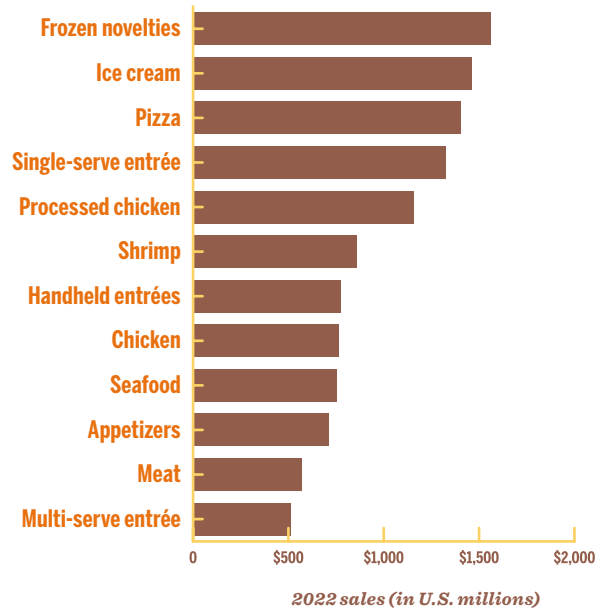


1-855-VENTURI
 (Toll Free in U.S. and Canada)
sales@quickdraft.com

TASTE *test*

THE FRO-ZONE

Frozen novelties and ice cream products were the top frozen food categories in 2022, with pizza not far behind at No. 3. Single-serve entrées, though — like Aunt Ethel’s pot pies — compiled \$1.3 billion in sales, more than double that of multi-serve entrées.



Source: Frozen & Refrigerated Buyer: IRI

delicious, crispy and flaky topping,” a taster shared. “My husband and I were impressed with the quantity of chicken and vegetables. The sauce was so flavorful and just the right consistency. I really like that natural, quality ingredients are used.”

Also remarking on the preparation, a taster said, “I baked the crust as directed and microwaved the pot pie. Very straight forward and easy to do. Once it was done, it smelled good and tasted even better!”

The pot pie’s ingredients were also praised. One taster

remarked, “When cooked, it has a great visual – with the shredded bright orange carrots, plump green peas, and corn kernels,” and another stated, “The chicken and vegetables were nice sizes, didn’t have any fake tastes, and the cream sauce was very tasty. It had a nice cheese taste to it, but wasn’t overpowering and complemented the vegetables and chicken. I’m generally not a big fan of pot pies, but this one was delicious!”

And about the chicken specifically, one taster described it as looking

EVERSON
Spice Co.
Spice up your life™

*Custom Blender &
Custom Packaging*

*Seasonings, Dry
Rubs, Marinades,
Glazes, Breadings,
& More!*

www.eversonspice.com

TASTE *test*

“like I pulled it off the bone myself,” while another said, “I can’t get over the size and quantity of the white breast meat chicken! Really high quality, and makes this look homemade.”

Some tasters, though, were more critical in their assessments. One described the pie’s consistency as “soupier and thinner than anticipated,” another thought it “overly flavored in vegetable notes,” and another found the taste “kind of bland.”

Furthermore, in regards to taste, a number of tasters zeroed in on a specific ingredient — the red bell peppers. “[My wife] thought the peppers were an odd addition,” one taster said. “The red bell peppers are pretty, but not needed or expected in a pot pie,” shared another. And a third commented, “As people who don’t really eat cooked peppers, this was a deal breaker for us. The peppers threw off the flavor profile.”

This Taste Test was unique in that some tasters experienced quality issues. For them, sour notes were present in the gravy, and there was a gray color to the dish. We contacted Aunt Ethel’s, who promptly responded and sent us replacements; of the four tasters who experi-

enced initial issues, all reported that the replacements were consistent with the positive experience of many other tasters.

In a message, Aunt Ethel’s said the quality issues were “very troubling,” and that they “strive very hard to make sure that [the pot pies] taste the same as they have for the last 30 years that we’ve been selling [them].”

UPSHOT

In making their final assessments of the Aunt Ethel’s chicken pot pie, nearly all our tasters focused on the product’s price.

“A great innovation with the crust being flaky/crispy, but we definitely would not buy due to the high price and poor nutritional,” a taster said. “A fair price would be \$5-6.”

Another taster stated, “The pot pie was very, very good. Good taste, easy to make, and ‘real’ ingredients, but the price is a bit steep for the portion. If it was a little cheaper and available at the store, I would definitely buy it!”

At least two tasters, though, were convinced. The first shared, “The price is high, but you are getting what you pay for, and it’s much more satisfying than a typical grocery store pot pie.”

“Such a creative and smart idea to have the crust separate from the rest of the pot pie.”

TASTE *test*

And in more extensive comments, the second taster said, “I have never been the biggest fan of pot pie, but have to say Aunt Ethel’s changed my mind. It was really nice to be able to make such a delicious, very filling meal in five minutes.”

CONCLUSION

Aside from the outlying samples, overall, most of our tasters were impressed with the homemade quality, generous amount of chicken, and abundance of colorful vegetables — except for the polarizing bell peppers. But we

“I’m generally not a big fan of pot pies, but this one was delicious!”

have some concerns, specifically regarding product consistency and price. Given the quality of the ingredients, the high price is probably what is required for

Aunt Ethel’s to make a profit and, based on conversations overheard at the trade show, those buying at NYC bodegas are happy to buy it regularly. However, we

doubt if many people outside of NYC will be repeat buyers mainly because of the price, and also if they happen to get that occasional inferior product.

by **Jacqueline Beckley, The Understanding & Insight Group, and Anna Marie Cesario and Jennifer Vahalik, U&I Collaboration LLC.**

Food product development and consumer research veterans, Jacqueline Beckley, Anna Marie Cesario and Jennifer Vahalik, join Meatingplace Magazine as regular contributors to MeatingTaste, a consumer sampling of new products featured in our monthly Taste Test column. Here’s how the program works: The meat item is distributed to consumers, including the core demographic, for preparation in their own houses. No instructions are provided to the consumer, other than to write their overall impressions of the product, as well as to evaluate the flavor, texture, packaging and ease of use. Beckley, Cesario and Vahalik look for common threads by using Getting It!®, a system developed to listen to consumers about products. The sample of people is not intended to be a ‘taste test’ in a controlled setting, nor is it intended to simulate a focus group. Others are doing both. Rather, the intent is to interpret the response of the people who might purchase a product like this and use it, simply based on their encounters with the product in their individual, unique home environment. That is how U&I has been developing cutting-edge product and people understanding since 1999.



ADVANCED FOOD SYSTEMS, INC.

WE CREATE AND MANUFACTURE INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR PRODUCTS.

Our expert culinary and food science team is ready to help develop your customized ingredient system based on your food challenges.

☎ (800) 787-3067 | (732) 873-6776
🌐 www.afsnj.com
📍 AdvancedFoodSystems



Our SeasonRite® Marinades, SeasonRite® Seasonings, and Chef-Ready® Sauce and Glaze bases are complete solutions combining the perfect balance of texture and flavor to help create your next unique bold product.

Recently developed ethnic flavor profiles include:
Spicy Korean BBQ, Adobo, Nashville Hot, Habanero Lime, Santa Fe, Achioté, Thai Red Curry, Harissa, Caribbean Jerk, and other existing profiles are available.

Contact us to find the best product for your application.