

Yum! Flavorful Wraps and Glazes Show Off Fruit and Vegetable Tastes and Textures

Shiny, colorful, and wonderfully edible, the glistening sheets of fruit and vegetable films from Origami Foods LLC add elegance and appeal to appetizers, entrées, sides, sushi rolls, desserts—and more.

Chefs love them!

So do home cooks interested in creating a tantalizing offering that uses all-natural ingredients. The wraps are easy and fun to work with, which is one reason why new ideas about how to use them keep coming in from home kitchens as well as restaurateurs and caterers, says Origami Foods founder Matthew de Bord.

The pliable-yet-strong wraps are made with purées of fresh fruits and veggies, along with other plant-derived ingredients. The company sells the films as square sheets; small, preformed cones; and sheets that melt to form perfect glazes.

To create the wraps and glaze sheets, de Bord worked with Agricultural Research Service research leader Tara H. McHugh and food technologist Carl Olsen to apply the team's patent-pending technology for what is now an impressive array of edible films. The team did the work under the auspices of a cooperative research and development agreement.

McHugh and Olsen are with the Processed Foods Research Unit and are based at the ARS Western Regional Research Center in Albany, California, near San Francisco; de Bord's company is headquartered 80 miles east in the central California city of Stockton.

All of Origami's fruit and veggie wraps contain at least 75 to 90 percent fruit or vegetable, according to de Bord. The wraps and glazes are low in calories and fat and contain no additives, preservatives, or artificial flavors or colors.

The company's website, www.origami-foods.com, has recipes and more than two dozen photos displaying delicious, innovative ways to use the wraps. Some examples: Appetizers with an updated look, made by cutting a sheet of sweet corn wrap into small squares that are then rolled into small cones to fill with chipotle cream cheese. A drop of honey, allowed to dry before the cones are filled, keeps them from unrolling. Larger cones shaped from the rich-red strawberry wrap make attractive, edible holders for individual servings of a fresh-fruit salad of black seedless grapes, sliced strawberries, and pineapple chunks.

Wraps have a role with entrées, too. Origami's apple-honey-maple glaze, for example, provides a pleasing blend of flavors for the spiral-sliced hams sold by a major supermarket chain.

And a nationwide specialty grocer chose Origami's carrot wrap for sushi rolls filled with sticky rice, avocado, carrot bits, and imitation crabmeat. "The wraps are an alternative for folks who don't like the traditional seaweed," says de Bord.

For the occasional indulgence, an apple-cinnamon wrap filled with a scoop of vanilla-toffee cheesecake makes a dessert that's simply scrumptious.

Origami's rainbow of wraps includes mango, broccoli, tomato, tomato-basil, carrot-ginger, red bell pepper, and others.

There's a serious side to these fun and flavorful wraps. "Most Americans don't eat the recommended daily amount of fruits and vegetables," says McHugh. "The fruit-and-veggie wraps remind the palate of the rich array of flavors that produce can provide. And we think the wraps are a fun way to introduce kids to fruits and veggies that they may not have tried, such as mangoes."

A backpacker and cyclist before he became an entrepreneurial California "film-maker," de Bord is enthusiastic about a new idea—little "ravioli-like" snacks that he says should be especially convenient to take along on a hike or bike ride. The treats he's tested, each a 1-inch square, include a strawberry wrap with about a teaspoon of peanut butter hidden inside. He wants to find a manufacturer for these little two-bite treats, which, with their edible wrappers, are "an ideal snack when you're in the great outdoors."—By **Marcia Wood, ARS.**

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Tara McHugh, research leader for the Processed Foods Research Unit, casts carrot wrap into rolls.