

Search for the best bites

JOLENE THYM
Picky Eater

MOST WEEKS, I try at least five new products. Honestly, most of them are a miss — wine that tastes like cardboard, seafood that you'd rather feed to the cat, nuts gone rancid, drinks that taste like sugar water. But I keep putting stuff in my mouth in search of the wins, those amazing and wonderful new foods that people really need to know about.

La Tortilla Factory's new soft corn tortillas are one of those. These tortillas are as silky as a flour tortilla, but made with corn, which has more flavor and more nutritional benefits than white flour. Even better, the tortillas are made without hydrogenated fats. The result is, in my opinion, 120 calories of deliciousness. I love these wrapped around a little salad or a hunk of cheese (my vice) but they'd be the perfect thing to serve alongside pulled pork or chile verde. The company even makes flavored versions — the chipotle is great.

What I especially love about these tortillas is that they are so supple that, unlike traditional corn tortillas, they don't need to be toasted or warmed. If you're hooked on flour tortillas, give these a try. You may never go back. La Tortilla Factory, based in Santa Rosa, delivers its tortillas and wraps five days a week to stores throughout the Bay Area. They can be found at SaveMart, Lucky's, Raley's, Safeway and Whole Foods. They're about \$2.50

per dozen.

PICKLE PERFECTION:

After nearly a dozen e-mails and mis-routed boxes in the space of a month, I finally connected with a box of **Wickles Pickles**, a line of gourmet pickled peppers and such that turned out to be worth the wait — and maybe even worth the price. They're sweet and hot and sour and guaranteed to shake up the palate. The seedy texture of the Hoagie Relish is a bit odd, but the other Wickles are good straight out of the jar, on top of potatoes, alongside chicken or tuna, and perfect with an old-fashioned grilled cheese sandwich. And the very best thing about Wickles Pickles? It's fun to say! Find the pickles at fine grocers or online at www.wicklespickles.com. They're about \$5 per pint-size jar.

ONE HOT BEER: If the pickles didn't wake you up, grab a bottle of the new nonalcoholic **Fever-Tree Ginger Beer** and take a swig. Yowza. This stuff is pure ginger. It's like sucking on a root dipped in a bit of sugar. I love that it's not too sweet and that it delivers so much flavor that you could mix it with just about anything — from

bubbly water to vodka and lemonade. After a couple of wake-up sips off the 6.8-ounce bottle, I dumped the remainder into a vat of sangria. It was a perfect addition, giving the drink a new kind of kick. Fever-Tree is just arriving in the U.S. It's due to be at Whole Foods, BevMo, and specialty

stores like The Pasta Shop in Oakland and Berkeley sometime this month. The only downside to this ale is price. It's about \$2.75 per bottle.

TOMATO TIME:

I'm ready for some vine-ripened, fresh-from-the-garden tomatoes, the kind that are so pretty I can hardly bear to slice into them. As it turns out, my skin and eyes are more than ready as well. According to researchers, the lycopene in tomatoes — cooked and raw, vine-ripened or not — is hugely beneficial in protecting the skin from cancer. We still need to seek shade and avoid extra UV rays, but those who slurp extra tomatoes in summer are even less at risk for cancer. Slurp to your health.

Reach Jolene Thym at 510-353-7008 or jthym@bayareanewsgroup.com.

