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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

NASFT Announces Outstanding Specialty Retailers of 2012

Awards to be presented at Summer Fancy Food Show in Washington, D.C.

New York, N.Y. (April 24, 2012) – The Outstanding Retailers of 2012 were announced today by the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade, Inc. (NASFT). The awards recognize excellence in customer service, product sourcing, merchandising, quality assurance and a passion for presenting top-quality food.

The five outstanding retailers are: Caviar & Bananas, Charleston, S.C.; City Feed and Supply, Jamaica Plain, Mass., Eli's Manhattan, New York City; Mollie Stone's Markets, Mill Valley, Calif., and Pastoral Artisan Cheese, Bread & Wine, Chicago.

The winners range from a neighborhood storefront and café to a 20,000-square-foot gourmet emporium to a nine-store natural and specialty supermarket chain. They were selected by a national panel of specialty food experts including previous honorees, manufacturers, distributors and editors of *Specialty Food Magazine*.

“This year’s winners share a true commitment to providing premium service, well-edited choices of the latest new products, and a deep connection to their communities that are hallmarks of the specialty food industry,” says NASFT President Ann Daw.

The awards will be presented on June 18, 2012, at the [Summer Fancy Food Show](#) in Washington, D.C., in a red-carpet ceremony hosted by Jose Andres, the noted chef and culinary innovator. Winners are featured in the May/June issue of NASFT’s [Specialty Food Magazine](#) (available online May 1).

Nominations for the Outstanding Specialty Retailer Awards were made by members of the NASFT. The NASFT is a not-for-profit trade association for food artisans, entrepreneurs and importers. Retailers with the most nominations were asked to present detailed information about their companies, including menus, newsletters, training manuals, customer comments, promotional materials, press coverage and photographs to assist the judges in their deliberations.

Honorable mentions went to seven retailers. They are: Court Street Grocers, Brooklyn, N.Y.; Gateway Market, Des Moines, Iowa; Farm Basket, Lynchburg, Va.; Formaggio Kitchen, Cambridge, Mass.; Parker and Otis, Durham, N.C.; Toucan Market, Las Cruces, N.M.; and Wagshal's, Washington, D.C.

About the winners:

Caviar & Bananas

Opened in 2008 by husband-and-wife team Kris and Margaret Furniss, this gourmet market and café features a sushi bar, prepared foods all made on site and a wide-ranging product mix from, indeed, caviar to bananas. Located in downtown Charleston, S.C., the store takes its aesthetic cues from New York City's top specialty food markets.

City Feed and Supply

This natural foods grocery, café and deli, with two locations, is far more than a purveyor of quality natural foods. Owners Kristine Cortese and David Warner are deeply involved in their Massachusetts community, and source local and regional products from small farms and artisan producers. The couple had no retailing experience when they decided to open a specialty food store in 2000.

Eli's Manhattan

Opened in 1998 by noted merchant Eli Zabar with inspiration from the food halls of Europe, Eli's Manhattan has become a neighborhood institution on the exclusive Upper East Side. With 20,000 square feet of space, the store is packed with baked goods made on site, prepared foods, fresh fish, aged meat and cheeses and a changing array of the latest specialty foods.

Mollie Stone's Markets

College pals Dave Bennet and Mike Stone opened their first store in 1986 to bring natural foods to a larger market in the Bay Area of San Francisco. Since then, they've expanded to nine locations with more than 30,000 products in the largest units. The retailer is known for its in-store demonstrations and lively social media program to connect with customers.

Pastoral Artisan Cheese, Bread & Wine

With three locations in Chicago, this retailer is known for its carefully edited selection of artisanal foods, including more than 150 cheeses, as well as its Artisan Producer Festival at Chicago's French Market. Owners Greg O'Neill and Ken Miller opened the first location in 2004, taking inspiration from years of traveling and living abroad and finding a scarcity of market-driven shopping at home.

About the NASFT

The NASFT is celebrating its 60th anniversary. It is a not-for-profit trade association established in 1952 to foster commerce and interest in the specialty food industry. Today there are more than 2,900 members in the U.S. and abroad. The NASFT's website for consumers, foodspring.com, provides an insider's look at specialty foods and the companies, food entrepreneurs and artisans behind them. For more information on the NASFT and its Fancy Food Shows, go to specialtyfood.com.

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