

The Rosengarten Report

THE FOODS AND WINES THAT MAKE ME SWOON

THIS MONTH'S TASTING SCOOP



3 GARLIC GOLD, SEVEN OAKS RANCH
(various prices under \$10 for various products in this line)

Here's another company I wrote about a few years ago that has recently introduced some new products. In this case my purpose is, yes, to tell you about the new ones....but also to insist you get the old ones, which have become absolute staples in my pantry!

Let's start with this truism that I'm sure many of you find as true as I do: NEVER HAVE YOUR HEAD TURNED BY GARLIC CONVENIENCE PRODUCTS!!! Lord knows, over the years I've tried hundreds of them, always looking for that short cut around the never-neat peel-and-chop process with fresh garlic. Garlic in a glass jar, garlic in oil, minced garlic in oil, etc., etc., until the day came when I accepted the peeling and chopping of fresh garlic as an eternal given in my cooking life.

About five years ago, another day came....the day that Garlic Gold products showed up at my door. I was skeptical, of course....but my eye was caught by a product called Garlic Gold Nuggets, Organic (\$4.45, for 2.1oz)....which had exactly the look of the fresh garlic bits I brown up to toss with pasta and other things. I'd never seen convenience garlic in this form before. Could it be.....? Yes it could.... Very definitely yes. It was! These guys were scrumptious, very fresh-tasting, a lot like what I make myself. And all I had to do was screw open a jar! I'm telling you the raw, honest truth.....I use 'em all the time.

I did a little research, and found out that this southern California company, Garlic Gold, started in 2002, when Rinaldo Brotuco helped his 8th-grade son with a school economics project: creating a business plan. They chose to focus on Rinaldo's home-made garlic nuggets. They created a prototype: crunchy, toasted nuggets mixed with a bit of cold-pressed organic extra-virgin olive oil. Then they saw the light! The business launched, they expanded to two more products (a very good Garlic Gold Oil, \$9.95 for 250ml, and an excellent Garlic Gold, \$5.95 for 3.75 oz, the nuggets in a lot of olive oil), and, just this year, expanded the original "nuggets" line by adding three new flavors.

Once again, these guys surprised the hell out of me. All of these new products have the same integrity of the original—and, in the scary world of added flavor, each one has an exciting additional profile, not at all artificial tasting. I can see literally thousands of uses.

The **Garlic Gold Sea Salt Nuggets** (\$5.45 for 2.3 oz) is fantastic: there's a great, bracing saltiness, and, if you toss with oiled pasta, nothing extra is needed!

I'm astounded by the **Garlic Gold Italian Herb Nuggets** (\$5.45 for 1.6 oz): how many dried-herb preps in little jars taste appealing? This one does!—kind of like the great oregano sprinkled over a pizza at a good pizza parlor.

Lastly, there's the one I had least hope for: the **Garlic Gold Parmesan Nuggets** (\$5.45 for 2.2 oz). Now, we all know that "Parmesan" ain't likely to be Parmigiano-Reggiano, and the taste ain't likely to be great. Garlic Gold defies again! OK....so this doesn't taste exactly like Parmigiano-Reggiano—but in tandem with the garlic, it tastes very, very good, in a very comfort-food way! A perfect sprinkle, say, for fettuccine tossed in butter.

I am not a convenience product guy....but with convenience this powerful, and a level of quality so surprisingly high.....I do make exceptions!