

Whole Foods Market® Honors 2014 'Supplier Award' Winners
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Company spotlights best in class supplier partners for outstanding innovation, responsible sourcing and commitment to quality standards

Last night, Whole Foods Market revealed the winners of its coveted annual Supplier Awards, the company's highest honors for producer partners that embody its mission and [core values](#). Out of thousands of Whole Foods Market suppliers nationwide, fewer than 50 have received one of these distinguished awards.

Two all-star producers earned the grocer's top "Supplier of the Year" award for outstanding all-around performance:

- [Pitman Family Farms](#) (Perishables) – for its deep commitment to animal welfare, leadership in non-GMO-fed meat production and dedication to quality. In addition to raising chickens that meet Steps 3, 4 and 5 on the [5-Step™ Animal Welfare Rating System](#), Pitman Family Farms recently developed a new crossbreed of chicken that is better suited to an outdoor environment and, most recently, was the first supplier to earn approval to label its meat "Non-GMO Fed."
- [Suja Juice](#) (Non-Perishables) – for combining expertise in mixology, high-pressure pasteurization technology and ethical sourcing to reinvent the fresh juice category, and for partnering with Whole Foods Market to co-create Suja Elements™, an exclusive line of mission-driven, cold-pressed smoothies at value prices. The brand donates to nonprofits 20 cents from every bottle sold as part of the Suja Elements Cause Collective™.

"Shoppers trust Whole Foods Market to uphold the highest quality, ingredient and sourcing standards in the industry, and our suppliers go to great lengths to help us deliver on that promise every day," said Edmund LaMacchia, Whole Foods Market's global vice president of procurement, perishables. "Our Supplier Award winners set the gold standard for producers in the industry, and we're proud to celebrate their achievements."

In addition to its two "Supplier of the Year" honorees, Whole Foods Market recognized its cream-of-the-crop supplier partners in 16 categories that highlight several areas of achievement, including product innovation, environmental stewardship, ethical sourcing and excellence in quality standards and assurance.

"Every one of our supplier partners adds flavor, character and integrity to our stores, whether they're dedicated to land conservation, sustainable fishing methods or simply creating the best-tasting product on our shelves," said Jim Speirs, Whole Foods Market's global vice president of procurement, non-perishables. "We're thankful for their drive, true partnership and commitment to growing their business with Whole Foods Market."

The retailer revealed its Supplier Award winners at last night's reception in Austin, Texas, at the Stephen F. Austin Hotel. Additional honorees include:

Dedication to Responsible Sourcing:

- [Alaffia](#) – for the company's commitment to higher purpose in all aspects of business – from providing fair wages and advancing gender equality for women in West Africa, who produce its fair trade ingredients, to supporting Whole Planet Foundation's poverty alleviation efforts.

Outstanding Innovation:

- [Simmons Pet Food](#) – for its extensive research, product development and collaboration with Whole Foods Market to create the first store brand line of entirely grain-free, wet pet foods for the retailer's Whole Paws® brand.

New Product Innovation:

- [Gotham Greens](#) – for creating a first-of-its-kind rooftop greenhouse garden on Whole Foods Market's Brooklyn store. The garden provides customers fresh, delicious salad items while reducing food

miles, recycling 100 percent of water used and using integrated pest management practices.

Environmental Stewardship:

- [Alter Eco Foods](#) – for the brand's long history of responsible sourcing, and for launching its fair trade truffle line in innovative, compostable packaging – all the way down to each candy wrapper – that could degrade easily in both home and commercial compost operations.

Best New Product:

- [Brown Cow](#) – for helping Whole Foods Market reinvent the yogurt category with the exclusive launch and stunning success of its [Non-GMO Project Verified](#) Greek yogurt, the first-ever conventional non-GMO verified yogurt on the market.

Organic and Non-GMO Supply Chain Commitment:

- [Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps](#) – for strong commitment to organic and non-GMO ingredient sourcing and support for GMO labeling transparency. Dr. Bronner's donated more than \$2.3 million and rallied dozens of fellow suppliers to support "Yes" on 522 in Washington state, a GMO labeling ballot initiative that Whole Foods Market also endorsed. The company also produced a "Yes on 522" soap bottle label to prove that labeling foods would not drive up costs.

Best Partnership:

- [The Xerces Society](#) – for its tireless advocacy and research to protect pollinators like honeybees and monarch butterflies, which are vital to the global food supply, for its partnership with Whole Foods Market to raise awareness and funds for research through the "Share the Buzz" campaign, and for its work to help suppliers use pollinator-friendly sourcing and production methods.

Excellence in Cheese:

- [Vermont Creamery](#) – for commitment to premium quality products, supporting team member education, for partnering with Whole Foods Market to develop exclusive maple syrup and sea salt butter and vanilla crème fraîche. The brand is also recognized for its contribution to sustainable agriculture through a new commercial goat dairy with support from Evergreen Conservation Partners and Whole Foods Market's [Local Producer Loan Program](#).

Outstanding Wine and Beer Supplier:

- [Natural Merchants](#) – for importing only the finest organically grown and produced wines, including no-sulfite-added and biodynamic choices, and for its environmental stewardship and commitment to supporting family-owned wineries. Top brands include Spartico, VERTVS, Bodegas Irazo and Cantine Pizzolato.

Commodity Ingredients:

- [Blue Diamond Growers](#) – for consistent, high quality almond products, excellent communication and partnership to meet Whole Foods Market's business needs, and for leadership in the conservation of honeybees and other pollinators that play an important role in the global food supply.

Excellence in Product Quality:

- [Driscoll's \(Perishables\)](#) – for consistently delivering exceptional quality, service and outstanding flavor that shoppers crave in an important and beloved category – berries.
- **RAW SEAFOOD (Non-perishables)** – for innovation, responsiveness, flexibility and always investing in high quality and service.

Product with a Purpose:

- [Del Monaco Foods](#) – for its strong alignment with Whole Foods Market's missions – from sourcing local and organic products to supporting Whole Planet Foundation and Whole Kids Foundation – and

for being a go-to partner in food safety and transparency for more than 13 years.

Excellence in Standards:

- [Kvaroy Fiskeoppdrett, AS](#) – for delivering premium quality farmed salmon that is third-party audited to Whole Foods Market's industry-leading aquaculture standards. Based in Kvaroy, a small island off the coast of northwestern Norway, this family-run fishery is the epitome of community, integrity and standards, driving an exceptional product.

Outstanding Quality Assurance:

- [Trace Register](#) – for creating a tool to track Whole Foods Market's seafood purchases from source to store, ensuring quality, safety and sustainability for customers, and for its partnership in training and assisting producers and buyers on traceability.

Distinguished Service:

- [Fair Trade USA](#) – for outstanding commitment to improving the lives of farmers and farmworkers, and for evolving its work to expand the reach of the Fair Trade and Whole Trade Guarantee programs, all while maintaining the highest integrity. With Fair Trade USA's support, Whole Foods Market continues to offer shoppers more high quality, ethically sourced products that benefit the people and communities that produce them.

Special Recognition:

- [Ocean Beauty](#) – for consistently delivering outstanding wild Alaskan salmon and halibut that meet Whole Foods Market's strict specifications, and for partnering with port buyers to ensure fishermen are recognized and treated with respect.
- **Myrna Fossum** – for sharing her deep passion and incredible experience of sensory evaluation, and for teaching Whole Foods Market team members how to use their senses to help improve products.

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