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Some people merely stock their shops, others curate the merchandise.

Walking into Cut The Mustard, I was struck by how everything in it was carefully chosen.

As I perused the shop, I felt that the owners must have read my mind.

Somehow, they know I like jams from Sarabeth's, a lovely brunch place in New York's Upper West Side. They also carry Burts Hand Fried Potato Chips and Frontera Tortilla Chips, among others.

At the shop, I discovered Seasoned Pioneers spices (photo 1), a British brand that has stuff you read about in cookbooks but can never find here.

Then there are the sodas: Fever Tree Indian tonic water (photo 2), an

artisanal brand from Britain that smart bars everywhere are using.

Then there is, of course, Grown-up Soda (photo 3) from the United States, in interesting flavours such as Meyer lemon.

The husband-and-wife team of Gerald Tan, 38, and Lim Hui Chern, 33, quit their jobs as a human resource director and lawyer respectively to open this shop.

The well-travelled, friendly couple would cart back food products from abroad – flour for her bread making and hot sauces to feed his spicy obsession.

They figured there were others like them – people who want to cook with good ingredients.

So Cut The Mustard was born. The name comes from their insistence on trying everything to see if the products, well, cut the mustard.

I wanted just about everything but the budget does not allow for that. So I picked a few things that I really liked.

Sarabeth's Raspberry & Key Lime jam (\$12.90 for a 255g jar) is just pure fruit (photo 4). The intense berry flavour gets a bit of lift and lightness from the lime. Use it as a topping for pannacotta.

Burts Mature Cheddar chips, made in Britain, are very crunchy, fresh and light. Thank goodness the cheese flavour isn't too overpowering.

Now for the Fever Tree soda, named after the Fever Tree which provides quinine, the basic ingredient for tonic water.

The shop carries the Light Tonic Water (\$2.90 for a 200ml bottle), which is really the only thing to use when making gin and tonic. It has a fresh but not too bitter taste.

Then there's Les Anis De Flavigny (photo 5). These beautifully packaged anise candies from the Burgundy region in France have been made using the same labour-intensive recipe since 1591.

Green anise seeds are mixed with a sugar and water syrup and the pans are

turned so that the seeds roll over and over until they are covered with a white sweet shell. They look perfectly oval, the result of all the rolling around in the pan for 15 days. When you get to the end, the payoff is an anise seed in the middle.

Make the effort to go there – the store is a treasure trove of wonderful things.

Let's hope Cut The Mustard cuts the mustard with shoppers.

The owners are committed to searching out unusual products for their shop and I learn something new on each visit.

That's got to be worth something.

Cut The Mustard, 1 Greendale Avenue, tel: 6466-9436. Opening hours: 10.30am to 7pm (Tuesdays to Saturdays), noon to 6pm (Sundays and public holidays). Closed on Mondays



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