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Goya, guests celebrate warehouse's opening *Prince George event brings in visitors who feast on Latino dishes*

BY JOHN REID BLACKWELL
TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

Oct 12, 2006

Goya Foods Inc. proclaimed its presence in Virginia yesterday by giving a taste of itself to hundreds of guests.



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Tamales, empanadas, taquitos and other authentic Latino dishes were served up as Goya, a Secaucus, N.J.-based food company, marked the opening of its warehouse and distribution center in Prince George County.

The company started shipping products to customers from the 109,000-square-foot facility two weeks ago.

"We have almost the whole state of Virginia here today,"

joked Robert Unanue, the company's president, at a ceremony packed with local officials, employees and other guests. He also quipped that the company chose the site because he heard that "Virginia is for lovers." That's the state's tourism promotion campaign.

"Virginia is for lovers of business," Unanue said. Goya considered other states for the warehouse, he said, but chose the site in the SouthPoint Business Park just off Interstate 295 because it will be an ideal hub to ship products to customers in Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

The privately-owned company sells 1,500 Latin American food products and is adding products constantly, executives said.

More than 300 people attended the event, including Gov. Timothy M. Kaine, who gave Goya executives a framed replica of a stock share from the original Virginia Company, the English commercial venture that sent settlers to Jamestown in the early 1600s.

"We like to think that for 400 years we have been about global trade," said Kaine, who spoke to the crowd partly in Spanish.

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Goya invested \$5.1 million in the warehouse, which runs two shifts with 30 employees. The work force will eventually grow to between 60 and 70.

Contact staff writer John Reid Blackwell at jblackwell@timesdispatch.com or (804) 775-8123.

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