

## Local sauce maker celebrates 1st year

By *Kate Bucklin* (published: August 30, 2007)

PORTLAND – Sitting around their office dining table, the Good Clean Food crew is once again digging in to the product they have spent countless hours tasting and discussing.

Creole shrimp and Scandinavian dill salmon constitute lunch on this Friday afternoon. The shrimp sit in a sauce full of peppers and tomato with a hint of Tabasco. The salmon gives off a clean appearance, covered in dill, carrots and shiitake mushrooms. Unassuming guests would never know that 10 minutes earlier the shrimp and salmon were raw in the fridge, next to the canned sauces now covering them.

“A lot of people bake their fish because it’s easy,” explained Carol Pickering of Good Clean Food. “This offers them another way to prepare it that is not intimidating.”

Although Good Clean Food launched its line of simmer sauces for fish in September 2006, the idea of putting a preservative-free, all natural sauce into a jar had been kicking around in company founder Kurt Shisler’s head for decades. In college, the business major would spend all day preparing a bouillabaisse when it was his turn to host dinner with friends. One commented to him during dinner one evening that it would be great to put his day’s work in a jar.



Shisler’s marketing career took him to General Mills where he worked on the Tuna Helper campaign and to Idexx. He tried a smaller scale sauce production in the ‘90s but burned out after a couple years.

This time around, he’s got Pickering and marketing director Rachel Ambrose to help him.

Good Clean Food’s offices are located on Middle Street and the simmer sauces are made here in Maine at a nearby production plant. Shisler said the company is actively seeking its own cooking facility in towns including Auburn or Saco.

“There is no kitchen set-up in the country to make this kind of food on this scale,” said Shisler. “It’s all from scratch. You can’t replace the taste of simmering ingredients together for hours.”

Because the sauces are preservative-free they need to be refrigerated. Pickering said this works to the company’s advantage because instead of being on a shelf in the middle of the market, Good Clean Food sauces are located in the seafood section.

The product is available in 65 Whole Foods and Hannaford supermarkets, from Maine down to Virginia. Very soon the company will introduce chicken simmer sauces in cacciatore, tarragon and Maine apple cider and also expand its seafood sauce offerings.

“We want to offer new flavors often,” said Shisler.

The sauces have been a hit when offered as samples in grocery stores, said Pickering. Kids, she said, are attracted to the smell and try it.

“Mothers are often surprised because it’s hard to get kids to eat fish sometimes,” she said. “They end up liking this.”



Shisler said the sauces also are attractive because they are familiar.

“We’re not in the business of trying to find new flavors that go together,” he said. “We’re using flavors that just work.”

While the name of the sauce plays into the local, natural food movement, Shisler said it actually came to him when he was a child.

The Shisler family was traveling across the country one summer, “the station wagon trip,” said Shisler, and stopped in Ketchum, Idaho.

“A VW van pulled up where we were stopped, and a couple hippies got out,” Shisler recalled with a smile. His mom asked the young men if they had any suggestions for a dinner spot.

“They suggested Aunt Betty’s,” Shisler recalled. “They said she had good clean food. Those words weren’t used to describe food back then and I always remembered it.”

Good Clean Food sauces are available at Hannaford stores in Maine and at Whole Foods in Portland.

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