

## **Gourmet News**

### **Yunk engineers career in gourmet industry**

By Katie Gallagher - 03.2008

SAN CARLOS, Calif.--If it wasn't for the dot-com bubble crash in 2001, Melanie Yunk might still be working as an engineer. But today, Yunk lives and breathes barbecue sauce as owner of Melanie's Fine Foods Inc. here.

After Yunk and her husband Kent lost their jobs in the technology field six years ago, the couple was in search of a new career path. "We weren't sure what we were going to do," Yunk said. "We had been buying Big Acres Chipotle Maple barbecue sauce for years and it was the only one my husband and I liked." The Yunks decided to buy Big Acres Gourmet Foods in 2002 from the sauces' creator who had been operating the company part-time.

"I took a chance and it has worked out great," Yunk said. "It has always been my dream to be in the food business."

Kent has since returned to the technology field, working for IBM, and Melanie embraced her specialty food career, turning the Big Acres name into an award-winning brand under the company name Melanie's Fine Foods. (See related story on page x.) Big Acres lineup of six gourmet sauces have earned six Scovie Awards for their fiery flavor.

A self-proclaimed "foodie," Yunk said she has always "been obsessed with simple, healthy gourmet food." While traveling around the world as an engineer she acquired a palate for different tastes and a passion for experimentation. Since buying the company Yunk has added three new sauces to the all-natural line--Mango Peach Chile, Milagro Mole and Chipotle Peanut--and created three spice rubs. Some of the original recipes have also been tweaked, Yunk said.

Sales have also increased. "Revenue has multiplied at least five times since I bought the company," Melanie said.

Melanie's Fine Foods also distributes grill accessories, including Savu Smoker Bags and several kitchen and grill gadgets, including Jaz Innovations' Oven Rack Guards and the William Bounds Sili Silicone Basting Brush.

Certified as a woman-owned business by Astra Women's Business Alliance, Melanie's Fine Foods is a small operation, with only a couple employees and contractors on the payroll, Yunk said. Along with the name change, Yunk gave the sauce line a new look. Additional flavors in both the sauce and spice rub lines are expected, Yunk said. She is also looking for more distribution.