



HOUSTON FAMILY

Family Recipe Turned Fortune

Lynn Lasher didn't set out to be Houston's Queen of chocolate sauce. In fact, when she started the business Somebody's Mother's Chocolate Sauce, she wasn't sure how successful it would be. The business began as a way to show her three children, Reese, 22, Hayden, 19 and William, 17, how to build a business.

"My mom made this chocolate sauce when I was little," Lasher says. "And everyone said, 'You should bottle this and sell it.' I mean, everyone loved it."

And while Lasher, who has a background in financial services, did think about bottling her mother's recipe, it wasn't until she met Roy Garcia, creator of Fito's Salsa, in March of 2005 that she got serious.

"His salsa is divine," she says. "And I met him when he was doing a demonstration for it. So I asked him, 'How did you get this from being in your head to being here in the grocery store?' He told me, and a month later I was incorporated." Six months after that, in October, Lasher's product was in stores.

Now, her five-month-old operation is churning out 950 jars a batch and is sold in specialty stores around Houston, Austin, Round Rock, Ingram and Tulsa. She's even had interest from purveyors in London.

"I had no idea it would be like this," says Lasher, who admits to being "bowled over by the support of friends and family."

Lasher calls her business a grown-up version of the lemonade stands her children used to operate across the street from River Oaks Pharmacy when they were small. Because of her business background, Lasher worked with them on issues such as quality control, where they'd experiment with whether bottled water made better lemonade than tap, or how advertising affected their sales.

As a working single mom, she says she felt "all that fear and loathing" that she wasn't spending enough time with her children, and that she tried to cram everything into the small amounts of time they did have together. The lemonade stand was a way for them to work together on a project and for her children to learn basic business principles.

Somebody's Mother's Chocolate Sauce evolved from those early lessons and each of her children works with the company in some way. Daughters Reese and Hayden, both attending the University of Southern California, have aspirations to act. While they're studying their craft, they are putting their business skills to use for their mom. Reese is the saleswoman extraordinaire, working with contacts in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C. and North Carolina to get the word out about her family's creation. Hayden, with her flair for design, was instrumental in creating the

package design for the sauce, and William, a junior at Kinkaid, helped his mom set up the pricing structure and continues to be involved in what his mother calls the "pure business" side of things.

"We didn't sit down and assign tasks for them," Lasher says. "They just naturally gravitated toward what they are good at and what they're interested in."

Lasher admits that when she started she was more interested in focusing on how to teach her children about business and less on the actual outcome. What she discovered is that people love chocolate and they love talking about it. She's also finding they love her "plain and simple" topping. Most people write to tell her they stick it in the fridge and then eat it right out of the jar with a spoon, although it makes a great topping for ice creams and fruit.

"It's really hard to have kids and work [outside the home]," says Lasher, who spent many years working in financial services to help raise her children after her divorce. "And it's really hard to have kids and not work," she explains, citing the fact that raising children is a true full-time and difficult job.

"I mean, it's great if you get to stay at home and you're married to a wonderful man who provides all you need and still walks the dog. But what happens when the children grow up or if you find yourself without a husband or partner? You've got to have a backup plan for yourself," says the entrepreneur.