



Whipping up success!

by Elissar Saleeba

Last year Lynn Lasher went looking for the recipe for success to teach her children a lesson in independence. Now she is whipping up Somebody's Mother's Chocolate Sauce, a delicious, all-natural ingredient topping.

In 2005, after working 20 years in financial services, Lasher decided to stake out on her own and set an example for her children. She remembered when she was finishing her undergraduate degree in French at UT.

Lasher said, "Three weeks before graduating [from college] my father asked me if I could make a living teaching French. It got me thinking about the notion of women and independence. The more independent we are the better. You don't know how your life is going to turn out."

She applied to Rice University's Jones School of Business and was in the first graduating class in 1979. She worked in the financial services industry until 1998 when she decided to take a time-out and stay home with her children.

She took up jogging around Memorial Park.

Lasher said, "One day my oldest daughter said, Mom, don't you realize you're literally running around in circles. Why don't you do something?"

In April 2005, Lasher set up her business structure, with her children as partners, and founded Somebody's Mother LLC, with an initial investment of \$25,000.

Working from her kitchen with her children, Lasher whipped up the



Entrepreneur Lynn Lasher is working hard getting her dessert topping out to the marketplace. Recently, she offered samples of Somebody's Mother's Chocolate Sauce to shoppers at Rice Epicurean. Photo by Elissar Saleeba



chocolate, and by January of this year, she had moved to a commercial kitchen to keep up with the demand for her product. Also that month, she opened her website for online sales. Soon, she was selling in excess of 1000 jars a month.

Lasher began her marketing by sending out samples to friends. One of her friends is Greta Van Susteren (whom Lasher met while volunteering for Katrina victims). She sent Susteren some chocolate as a gift, and the newswoman mentioned the sauce on Foxnews.com in February. Since then, Lasher has recouped her initial investment and hired a publicist. Now mentions of her chocolate are in newspapers nationwide, including the *Washington Post* and *Detroit Free Press*.

Lasher says, "We've had a ton of sales since the *Washington Post* story came out. Thanks to the Internet, we can reach more customers more cost-effectively than we could through other means."

Lasher credits the success of her business to careful planning and the quality of the product. The timing of her product's production in October 2005 and media blitz in March was not a coincidence. Lasher wanted to have her product hitting store shelves before the Christmas shopping rush and make her big push before Mother's Day. The stores that carry her product are all high-end food and gift stores.

Early on, Lasher had to make some choices about her packaging. Her daughter, Hayden, 19, designed the packaging, but when she crunched the numbers with her son William, 17, discovered they could save money on their packaging costs by reducing the number of inks used. It was either that or increase the price point.

Lasher says, "In small businesses, it is hectic, and you have to realize that pennies matter."

A good business plan means nothing if the product is not up to par. Lasher went for an all-natural recipe that her mother used to make for her when she was growing up.

For women wanting to go into business for themselves, Lasher advises them to do their homework, talk to people in business and learn from their successes and mistakes. From there, she says, develop a business plan, and stick to it.

"It is such fun to run a business; people are just extraordinarily nice and excited to talk about food – especially chocolate," she said.

Lasher takes a hands-on approach to her business: she promotes the product herself at stores and often does her own heavy lifting.

Lasher points out that selling her chocolate sauce is putting her children through college. At this point, she is not rich, but she is negotiating with a retailer to sell her chocolate in London and planning to expand the brand's product line.

"Business is fantastic, and we are growing," she Lasher. "We're building up a brand of trust and integrity."

And who wouldn't trust somebody's mother?

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