

## Farmer's markets allow business to grow

Baumann considers himself a 'indoor farmer', but routinely has to make one distinction when detailing his craft.

"I'm doing it indoors but I'm not a pot farmer," he joked.

Baumann's business first gained exposure in 2017 at the Saturday Market in Ilwaco and the Sunday Market in Astoria before spreading to local restaurant menus.

"The first year we were establishing a name and people were getting to know us. We did half the year in Astoria then the other half at the Ilwaco Market," Baumann said.

"It was great for us, we got a lot of recognition and the second year we started getting a lot of private customers and the Co+op."

The Astoria Co+op has since become Baumann's biggest buyer, purchasing fresh microgreens twice weekly.

"When they moved into their new building our business doubled with them. They are now our biggest account and our bread and butter," he said.

"I harvest to order every day and deliver to the Co+op two days a week (Sunday and Wednesday)."

Baumann estimated that the Co+op buys 'about 75 to 100' large salads and an equal amount of individual microgreens each week.

"The great thing about the Co+op is the customers are aware people when it comes to health, food and nutrition — they know what microgreens are," he said.

Baumann's next goal involves making microgreens more readily available on major supermarket shelves. He is hopeful the salads — as opposed to individual microgreens — will serve as a way to break into the bigger market chains. Baumann believes the limited awareness about microgreens is partially because they haven't become more common in bigger supermarkets, where most people shop.

"They haven't reached places like Fred Meyer yet. As far as I know, the Co+op is the only place in the world that sells microgreen salads," he said.

Baumann believes days of traditional pre-mixed bags of iceberg lettuce, shredded carrots could be coming to an end with the introduction of more microgreen mixes.

"People just aren't aware of them (microgreens). But anyone who eats a microgreen salad... that's all their ever going to want. I think it has potential to grow."

## Microgreen salads become 'money makers'

Baumann began his business growing about a dozen different individual microgreens but has since narrowed it down to for a variety of microgreen specifically for salad mixes.

"I specialize in the salads, that's where I make my money. The salads are now my brand," he said.

Baumann grows pea shoots, sunflower shoots, Rambo radish, china rose radish, wasabi, swiss chard, amaranth, broccoli, red acre cabbage, basil and arugula which serve as the basis for the salads.

The adaptability of microgreens allowed the farm to change crops to reach different markets, Baumann explained.

"Originally the idea around the microgreen business was restaurants, to grow them and provide chefs with these specialty items and maybe get them into the supermarkets," he said. Baumann is still embracing chefs and restaurants as customers, but they're no longer a focal point of his business.

While at the farmer's market Baumann noticed some customers would buy individual microgreens to mix into salads at home, so he started mixing salads specifically for the market.

"I made the salads and 'Bam!' everything sold out the first day. We started getting lines in front of our stall. This whole business evolved like that. I never had any of these ideas or knew it would go in this direction when I started. But like anyone in business, I follow the leads," he said.

The market allowed Baumann to interact and introduce microgreens to the public.

"As I was selling the salads at the farmer's markets and getting to know people, I realized that people didn't really know what to do with microgreens. They didn't understand microgreens, maybe they had heard about them. But they didn't know what to do with red acre cabbage or a box of Rambo radish. So I started making salads at the markets. It evolved into four signature specialty microgreen salads, each based with pea shoots:

The signature salads that Baumann now sells includes a 'colorful' spicy salad, with pea shoots,



It was only a few months ago when Richard Baumann was worried the covid-19 crisis would smother his small business. Instead, Baumann is experiencing unexpected growth and eyeing an expansion fueled by an increasing demand for his specialty microgreen salad mixes.

China rose radish, wasabi mustard and rambo radish; a health mix salad, with Swiss chard, amaranth, broccoli and/or red acre cabbage, described as 'a mild salad packed with nutrients'; a dark opal basil salad, with opal basil, amaranth, broccoli and/or red acre cabbage, described as 'a wonderful, crisp summertime salad.'

Peninsula Microgreens Farms also produces individual microgreens including sunflower shoots, which Baumann considers a great introductory microgreen.

"A big seller for us also is the sunflower shoots. People love them because they're crunchy and meaty. They're what I'm trying to promote the most when I'm talking to people. I want people to try them because they're such a great food and people don't know what they are. When they eat them they immediately want more."

Baumann is confident his new, nutrient-rich salads will speak for themselves once people try them.

"It's original, it's fresh and it's what people are looking for," he said.

## Microgreens

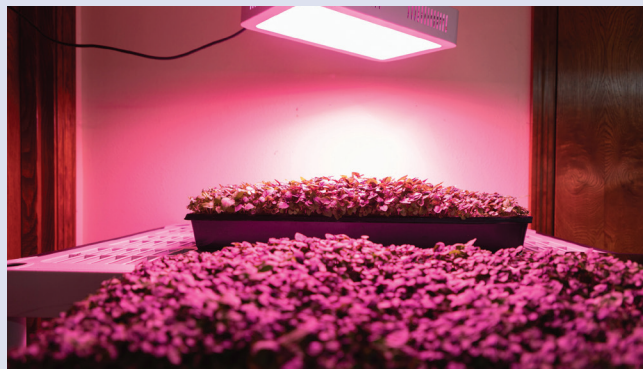
Not to be confused with sprouts or baby greens "microgreens" is a marketing term for the shoots of salad vegetables picked after their first leaves have developed. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the origin of microgreens is rooted in California in the 1980s, where they started primarily as a flavor component for fine dining restaurants. Since then, the use and awareness of microgreens has grown albeit somewhat slowly. They are commonly found in health food stores and farmer's markets, but remain largely unfamiliar to many.

Unlike conventional farming, where produce is usually deliberately spaced and grown to maturity under sunlight, microgreens are grown densely under ultraviolet or LED lights and harvested early, after about 10 to 20 days, when only inches tall. The China rose radish, for instance, goes from seed to harvest in about seven days. Conversely, the Swiss chard can take up to 21 days. The early harvest has health benefits according to Baumann.

"They're packed full of nutrients and life force," he said. "All the nutrients that are required to grow a seed into a plant, are in there. That's why they're a superfood."

## Peninsula Microgreens Farm

Richard Baumann, owner  
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Microgreens growing using LED lights.



Harvest to order every day and deliver to the Astoria Co+op.



Baumann sells his produce under the Peninsula Microgreens Farm label.