



THE CRUNCHIEST OF ALL

WILDTIME FOODS MAKES TASTY LOCAL GRANOLA BY DAEMON LEE

WHIT HEMPHILL, LEFT, AND BRAD AVERILL IN WILDTIME FOODS' PRODUCTION FACILITY

SNACKS & DIPS

From dessert-like confections to the perfect summer party snack, **Cosmos Creations** in Junction City has you covered. This company does amazing things with puffed corn. Its “Salted Caramel” snack is sweet, crunchy and melts in your mouth, while “Spicy Sriracha” tingles on the tongue. Cosmos started in 2004 but expanded in 2012 to its production facility in Junction City, and has been cranking out addictively delicious oven-baked corn ever since. Look up cosmoscreations.com to get your snack on.

You can trust **De Casa Fine Foods** to supply all the salsa, hummus, bean dip and tortillas needed for dinner or a football party. Manufactured in Eugene, De Casa's tortillas come in a variety of sizes, from adorably miniature “snack” size to hefty “burrito” size. All tortillas are vegan and pair well with De Casa's salsas, which come in mild, medium and hot. See the full line of products at decasafinefoods.com.

Granola is a health food and a symbol of the natural foods movement, and the word itself is sometimes used as a mildly derogatory epithet to describe a health-obsessed hippie.

Whit Hemphill and Brad Averill, co-owners of Wildtime Foods, which produces Grizzlies Brand granola, say they embrace granola and all it stands for.

“There’s something real tangible to it and direct about it,” Hemphill says about granola. “It’s not some mushed-up thing in a bar or in a powdered shake or something like that.”

“You just look at it,” he says of granola, and see that you “could have made it.”

Wildtime has been in business for 35 years, and in 2014, it relocated to a larger building in the Whiteaker, where Wildtime makes granola as well as trail mix, muesli and salted nuts.

From the outside, the Wildtime Foods building looks like any other office. It’s the smell that gives it away, a mixture of cinnamon, oats or nuts, depending on which recipe is being prepared that day. Inside, the ovens are giving off heat and people with aprons work steadily on the next batch of granola.

From this building, tucked away on 2nd and Van Buren next to the railroad tracks, Wildtime sends its Grizzlies granola to health food stores and co-ops across the West.

As perhaps is fitting, one of the original founders of the company was a musician, Doug Clark, who was trying to earn a bit of supplementary income. Clark, who was also involved with *The Eugene Comic News*, started making granola bars in 1981.

The company has since changed owners, but it has continued more or less doing the same thing. Each batch is relatively small, between 25 to 35 pounds, depending on the recipe. Many of these recipes have been around for years, like the organic

Swiss muesli, its best seller.

“I definitely think that what makes us unique is the small-batch, handmade process,” Hemphill says. “Most others in the industry don’t do it that way. It’s much more mechanized.”

Averill adds, “A lot of the places use a belt oven and they have a huge hopper where the stuff is mixed in. You’re literally dumping in 100 pounds of oats at the same time.”

They occasionally try new things as well, like the American Beauty granola, a tribute to the Grateful Dead. This granola has a salted maple flavor, a decision they made after sending samples to two former members of the Grateful Dead for feedback.

The move to the Whiteaker was a big transition. Previously the company was based in Glenwood, and the building there served its purpose for a long time, but the space was just too small, limiting storage and requiring workers to constantly slip by each other. Their excitement about the new building is evident as Averill and Hemphill point out the boxes and bags and bins stacked floor to ceiling in the two-story storage room.

“When we knew we were going to move, we really analyzed the workflow at each workstation and each process,” Averill says. “So when we came over here we could design those to be much more efficient.”

Business is going well for now, and the company is seeing new demand from places like Fred Meyer. And every day, the UPS truck comes and picks up the 25- to 35-pound boxes of granola to be shipped to stores from Oregon to Montana and northern California.

“Our idea is to continue to make craft, hand-made stuff,” Hemphill says, “and have it be something that is identifiable as a quality Oregon-made product.” ■

For more, see grizzliesbrand.com.



WILDTIME FOODS WAS FOUNDED IN 1981