

SAUCES & SPICES

Yep, there's a vanilla producer in Eugene, and it has the cutest name ever: **Singing Dog Vanilla**. The company says it works with farming families in Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, giving them a share of profits in exchange for sustainable growing practices. Singing Dog Vanilla sells its vanilla in traditional extract form, as well as vanilla beans, vanilla salt, vanilla coffee and lip-quenching vanilla lip balm. Get your vanilla fix at singingdogvanilla.com.

Marty Parisien and Bill Wiedmann founded **Red Ape Cinnamon** in 2013 with the goal of distributing everyone's favorite holiday-reminiscent spice. Red Ape's cinnamon is organic and grown in Sumatra. As you might have guessed, "Red Ape" is a reference to orangutans, natives of Indonesia. Red Ape says it donates 5 percent of its profits to "organizations that protect orangutans and their habitat." The company has also "adopted" a handful of great apes through Orangutan Outreach, a nonprofit dedicated to saving the primates. Head over to redapecinnamon.com to learn more.

MILK & HONEY

A fixture in Eugene since the 1970s, **GloryBee** overflows with honey and a love for bees. From its factory store on the outskirts of Eugene, GloryBee makes all of its products, including wax candles, cooking and baking supplies, a vast assortment of honeys and other sweeteners, and a comprehensive collection of beekeeping gear, helping out people interested in starting their own hive. GloryBee also gives back to the buzzy pollinators it depends on — through its "Save the Bee" initiative, GloryBee says it has raised \$65,658 for the Oregon State Honey Bee Lab to help fund bee research. For more, visit glorybee.com.

Nancy's Springfield Creamery, owned and operated by the Kesey family, got its start in 1970, and the company is still going strong. Nancy's yogurts, cottage cheese and sour creams are ubiquitous in Lane County, as is their cute, colorful packaging. Nancy's says most of its milk comes from farms within a 50-mile radius of Eugene — so you can thank local cows for all that creamy goodness. Head over to nancysyogurt.com for more.

Aptly named, **So Delicious** has spent the past 25 years making dairy-free delights in Springfield. Its ingredients include dairy alternatives like coconut milk, almond milk and cashew milk, and So Delicious doesn't stop at beverages. It also makes frozen desserts — check out "Dark Chocolate Truffle" ice cream made with cashew milk — yogurt alternatives and coffee creamers. The Eugene-based company was purchased by WhiteWave in 2014. Find more at sodeliciousdairyfree.com.

PACKING FOR THE FUTURE

SWEET CREEK FOODS OPERATES IN ELMIRA, OREGON

SWEET CREEK FOODS FILLS A NICHE IN LANE COUNTY'S LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

BY WILLIAM KENNEDY

Traditional capitalism teaches bigger is always better. Not so with Lane County-based Sweet Creek Foods.

"It isn't sustainable to grow too large," Sweet Creek owner and founder Paul Fuller tells *EW*. "You lose the flavor if you're trucking everywhere."

Located near Elmira, family-owned Sweet Creek Foods works with Eugene-area farms and food producers, co-packing and preserving food for consumers from Bellingham to San Francisco. "We believe in a static growth," Fuller says. "To go national takes fighting the big boys. We like the idea of being a regional player."

Fuller got his start in the refrigeration business, helping launch many well-known local food establishments. Fuller's wife Judy designs Sweet Creek labels and helps with the bookkeeping. The couple's sons have become involved in the family business as well. "We wanted to create a business to retire on," Fuller recalls, "and then we hoped to be able to maintain that size."

He explains, "We have about 30 different products," including tuna, pickles, marinara sauce, enchilada sauce and jam, all sold in glass jars. The enchilada sauce is loaded with flavor, tastefully spicy and complementary to other enchilada ingredients.

"Sweet Creek packs product for small companies and farms for farm stands and farmers markets," Fuller says, but also for local grocers like The Kiva, Sundance, Red Barn and many more.

"We've worked with a lot of the food businesses in town," Fuller says. "We've worked with Gathering Together Farms up in Philomath," he adds, as well as Junction City's Groundwork Organics. "We work with the fisherman out in Newport to get our tuna."

"We're trying to be the third leg in a local food system," Fuller says, explaining that some produce isn't available year-round in Oregon, and by preserving foods, Sweet Creek is "trying to work with the bounty here and get it to the people in a different way."

Sweet Creek prioritizes living-wage jobs for its employees. "Our goal is to keep the people that we have employed here," he says.

Fuller says this all makes Sweet Creek unique in Lane County's already thriving food industry — an industry he says is vibrant enough to make Eugene a "food hub."

"There's a lot of natural food stores," Fuller continues. "There's a lot of good organic produce available. People are very inclined to support local products and local production." Nevertheless, he says the economic potential of Eugene's food scene remains unrealized.

"We have the beer, we have the wine," Fuller says, noting Lane County also has several food processing businesses with small to relatively large-scale operations.

"We're a hub of food, [with] a lot of ideas about how to get local and regional food hubs going." ■

For more information about Sweet Creek Foods and their products, go to sweetcreekfoods.com or find them at your local natural grocer.

