

CRAIN'S CLEVELAND BUSINESS

SMALL BUSINESS

Unearthing a healthy mix

Juicing and cleanses no longer just serve fringe markets as more consumers look for ways to amp up organic consumption



Photo credit: CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Lisa Reed's Garden of Flavor brand of juices and cleanses has grown from producing 800 to 10,000 bottles per month.

By **KATHY AMES CARR**

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Lisa Reed traveled with her mother to alternative medicine clinics nationally and abroad — including to California, Mexico and Germany — looking for natural ways to remedy her mother's battle with cancer.

Despite the diversity of each facility, they all issued the recommendation of drinking juices loaded with organic greens such as kale, spinach, cucumbers and parsley to regenerate the body and fight against cancer cells.

That advice more than 25 years ago planted the seeds for Ms. Reed's 2011 launch of Garden of Flavor, a brand of organic, cold-pressed juices and cleanses that have been gaining a considerable foothold over the last year in Ohio's natural food grocers.

"People are becoming more aware of the benefits of juicing but either don't have the time or money to make juice daily," said Ms. Reed, an avid juicer, raw foods chef and certified holistic educator. "This product packs 20 pounds of raw vegetables, fruits and nut milks into six bottles, which nourish your body for the day."

To meet production demand, Ms. Reed last year expanded from a small office in Chagrin Falls into a

3,500-square-foot facility in Cleveland's MidTown neighborhood. Monthly production since then has grown from 800 to 10,000 bottles, with distribution to 25 markets in Ohio, including Heinen's Fine Foods, Whole Foods Market, Mustard Seed Market in Solon and Akron; and Chagrin Falls-based Lemon Falls.

The juices also recently entered Michigan, and Ms. Reed expects to broaden a Midwest presence with product placement in Chicago, Indianapolis and Minneapolis.

"We anticipate making Garden of Flavor available in 125 stores by the end of this year," and bolstering production to about 40,000 and 50,000 bottles, she said. Her plan also calls for adding two more full-time staff to bring to five the total number of employees.

Going green

Juicing and cleanses are moving away from a fringe pursuit and finding favor among a broader consumer base looking for a convenient way to consume their daily quota of raw, organic greens and fruits.

Companies that make cold-pressed juices say their products improve consumers' mental clarity, promote weight loss and overall well-being.

Ms. Reed, who sources when in season certified organic produce from Green Field Farms in Wooster, uses a hydraulic presser that applies thousands of pounds of pressure to slowly extract the raw vegetable and fruit juice.

The process occurs in a 39-degree room to prevent oxidation and chemical breakdown, therefore preserving vital vitamins and minerals. The juices then are immediately bottled and refrigerated to extend their shelf lives.

Her cleanse, which can be part of a one-day or even five-day regimen, condenses a couple shopping bags worth of produce and nuts into various flavors, such as goji pineapple, cucumber fresh and twisted roots.

She plans to roll out early this year a new green juice that incorporates live probiotics, which aid in digestion and provide a booster shot to the immune system.

Paul Neundorfer, a loyalist of the Mean Green dark vegetable medley, attests to the natural energy level lift the juices promote.

"I'm on the go all the time, so I go through a couple cases a week of the juice," said Mr. Neundorfer, who operates a landscape architecture business, Aristotle Design Group, and is co-executive director of the nonprofit Refugee Response. "You don't get those highs and lows, like you're starving or need to take a nap because you just ate too much."

Flexing some muscle

Those thirsty for the nutrient-dense beverages will have a similar outlet in Beet Jar Juice Bar, which is set to unveil in the coming weeks its line of all-vegan, organic juices from a storefront in Ohio City's Hingetown neighborhood, which is located between the Market District, Gordon Square Arts District and the Warehouse District.

Anna Harouvis is working on increasing the footprint of her vegan cold-pressed juice cleanses beyond a regular clientele of high-powered executives and sports agents who patron her Good To Go Cafe, located in downtown's IMG Building.

"I tried to sell my raw juices for the first time in 2001, then 2003, but the market thought it was too new-age and wasn't yet ready for it," she said. "We have more clients, just like you and me, who don't see this as a diet but a sustainable way to rejuvenate their bodies."

She says she plans to market her juices to regional professional and college sports teams after she ramps up production.

"People are starting to see the negative effects of sports drinks filled with sugar and are realizing the benefits of cold-pressed juices," Ms. Harouvis said.

Cleveland Clinic registered dietician Kristin Kirkpatrick acknowledges that cold-pressed juices provide the vitamins and minerals that most consumers otherwise wouldn't consume in the recommended quantities, but cautions her patients against misinterpreting those products as meal replacements.

Her recommended approach to nutrition comes in the form of healthy diets that people can sustain not merely in the interim, but 30 days from now, and even longer.

"The bottom line is for people to have healthy diets with food in its whole state too, a regular exercise regimen and stress control," said Ms. Kirkpatrick, wellness manager for Cleveland Clinic's Center for Lifestyle Medicine.