

# Brimstone Originals

## Shines as Example of Small Business Success in Pinellas



The process of starting and growing a small business can be overwhelming. Eileen O'Hara, co-owner of **Brimstone Originals Specialty Foods**, turned to the **Florida Small Business Development Center (FSBDC) Network** nearly 12 years ago to launch her business and has been a regular client ever since. Over the years she and daughter and co-owner Julie Stevens have built their Pinellas County business with assistance from the FSBDC's wide array of tools and resources.

"We started out as a cottage industry, but as we've grown it's been interesting, the challenges that we've faced," says O'Hara.

Brimstone Originals, which manufactures a line of all-natural pepper jellies, began as a good idea, explains Kurt Forster of the **FSBDC at Pinellas County Economic Development**, and with strategically-directed growth has developed from an item offered at local Saturday morning markets to a product stocked nationally in grocery stores.

"Through **one-on-one consulting** and participation in **FSBDC workshops** and events such as our annual **Pinellas County Finance Fair**, Eileen and Julie have learned how to manage their company's growth exceptionally well," says Forster.

Meeting with Forster, O'Hara and Stevens learned that they were undervaluing her products with their pricing structure. Forster encouraged the duo to raise their retail prices.

"We've come to understand that our product is special and people really like it, and if they like it they're going to pay for it. Our bottom line has definitely changed," says O'Hara. "We are now in at least 60 select Publix stores as far south as Miami and into the Carolinas."

From home-based start-up to nationally-stocked grocery product, O'Hara and Stevens have shown that with the right tools and a solid plan for growth come small business success. So, what's next for the company?

"In order for the product to get exposed to more and more people, we have to demo, as with any food product," answers O'Hara. "We want to get those demos going in those Publix stores because we'll clear the shelves every single time."

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