Sonia Fernandez met David Wells and began dating while attending the Culinary Institute of America. They married, settling in New York City where they worked under top chefs at restaurants including Le Bernardin and Gramercy Tavern. In 1998 Sonia and David moved to Connecticut and started a catering company, Saugatuck Kitchens, which operated out of a tiny rental space that formerly housed a pizza shop.

A key component to Saugatuck Kitchens’s catering operations were handmade hors d’oeuvres that could be baked from frozen at event sites while maintaining the desired flavor and presentation. These hors d’oeuvres became such a hit that the Wells’s began selling them to other caterers, hotels, and restaurants. Demand was so high that in 2000, the couple ceased catering operations altogether to focus on the gourmet frozen hors d’oeuvres sales. >>

**504 loans have added 14,569 jobs to the CT economy**

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CAST Preschool
Danbury Sports Dome
All Pallet Recycling

Source: U.S. Small Business Administration
SAUGATUCK KITCHENS CONTINUED

The growth led them to utilize an SBA 504 loan in 2004 to purchase a 5,500 square-foot space along with new equipment. This space was over six times larger than the original space, comfortably fitting the operations and three employees.

Within a decade, the company sales surpassed $2 million and hired an additional 17 employees. The product line had increased to include 70 varieties of hors d’oeuvres. Saugatuck Kitchens’s products are now served in notable venues like Yankee Stadium, Gillette Stadium, Waldorf Astoria (NYC), Opryland Convention Center, and more.

To keep up with continually growing demand, the owners purchased a facility in Stratford, CT in 2016, which is three times larger than the previous property. The couple turned to the SBA 504 loan once again to finance the $2.2 million building and equipment. The company now has 32 employees and continues to hire and grow.