

# Adding Spice to Austin's Palate Texapeños

By Krystle Russin

**R**andy Lindholm is officially the hottest man in Texas. Yes, you read that correctly. The man is hot: not for his new romantic comedy or sexy music video but his award-winning jalapeno sauces. Tired of the grocery store salsas that taste like used sandpaper, he and business partner Troy Burklund created their own line of organic salsas called *Texapeños*.

"They never had enough body, not the flavor I wanted," Lindholm says of the store sauces. "So I started blending peppers with different garden products to meet my taste. I cranked out three hot blends right away: a red, an orange, and a green." Lindholm next began using friends as guinea pigs to learn how the sauces could be improved. "I soon picked up from some of my taste testing friends that they wanted their sauces less hot, so I adjusted my recipes to tame down the spicier sauces to better fit mainstream palates."

From there, Lindholm's sauces gained word of mouth – "we started out in a commercial kitchen and selling our sauces at local and small town festivals," he says – but what really made *Texapeños* well-known was entering his creations in the Austin Chronicle's 2003 Hot Sauce Festival.

"We took home first place in the Green Sauce division of commercial bottlers with our Gourmet Green Pepper Sauce," the sauce man remembers. In 2004, they retained their first place title. Gourmet Red and Orange Flame also claimed first place in other categories in 2003, and Red Flame won second place in the Pepper Sauce competition.

"The win helped catapult us into the HEB Central Markets with all five of our fresh pepper sauces. We had to then begin to work with a food manufacturer, or co-packer, to produce larger volumes of our product."

*Texapeños* aren't any ordinary salsa dips: they can be used for almost any food. Lindholm had more than a few suggestions.

Lindholm says *Texapeños* are perfect with "any protein dishes: for beef, I use it on my burgers, beef enchiladas, fajitas, breakfast tacos." On chicken: "chicken enchiladas, mixed into your chicken salad for sandwiches, and it is also great as a marinade." On fish: "great fish glaze." On vegetables and salad too: "Gourmet Red is my salad dressing. Texpenos sauces go great mixed in with stir-fry vegetables or to liven up green bean casserole. I also feature it in a garden fresh Okra Creole recipe I have up on the website." In fact, *Texapeños* are so good at livening up meals that they could probably be thrown on two-month-old cottage cheese and make it taste amazing.

The sauces lack preservatives and last approximately one year since they don't contain tomatoes. The fact that *Texapeños* dips are organic is surprising, considering that organic foods occasionally earn the "it's not as tasty as the regular version" reputation. Why peppers? Why not something like cheese or potatoes?

"I really like hot peppers and have grown them for almost 20 years. I usually plant too many plants and have a lot of extra peppers to experiment with," Lindholm said.

When not out doing sampling sessions at grocery stores and events, Lindholm is supply chain manager for Applied Materials. Though a bachelor's degree in management and his career experience didn't exactly prepare him for his latest jalapeno adventures – "I have worked in the aerospace and semiconductor industries for the past 23 years," said Lindholm – he has enjoyed the excitement of watching his sauces grow in popularity. The future includes plans for more *Texapeños* spin-offs.

"I have a really special traditional Pepper Sauce I developed two years ago out of Scotch Bonnet peppers, my 6th sauce and so named, *Texapeños* No. 6.

That will be the start of *Texapeños* dry goods line of traditional pepper sauces," the native Austinite revealed.

"Next up after that, I am working on a traditional green jalapeno sauce which we have already named 7's Heaven. We may expand to other foods and jellies down the road, but for now, hot sauce is our push."

The sauce man wants people to remember that *Texapeños* products are "fresh pepper sauces with BIG flavor." To quote Paris Hilton: "That's hot." For more information on *Texapeños*, ordering sauces and where to purchase them in Texas, visit them online at <http://www.Texapeños.com>. **TW**

