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Gunther's Gourmet Salsas Make a Splash

BY TINA ESHLEMAN

The salsas, salad dressings and marinades made by Henrico County-based Gunther's Gourmet are pleasing judges' palates in contests around the country. The company, owned by brothers Mike and Nick Lampros, announced this week that its products won 14 of the top places in the 2009 Hot Pepper Awards, which were judged this fall in New York City. Earlier in the year, Gunther's products won 11 awards at Zest Fest 2010, sponsored by Chili Pepper Magazine in Texas, and the 2010 Scovie awards, sponsored by Fiery-Foods.com in New Mexico.



Mike Lampros says he's especially pleased that each of the four new salsas introduced by the company this year has won two national awards. The new salsas are: ginger pineapple, cranberry haba ero, peri-peri dark cherry and jalape o salsa fresca.

"We're up against the big companies that make salsa, but we win everywhere we go," he says.

Mike Lampros graduated in 1988 from the University of Richmond, where he studied political science and sociology before attending the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y. He started the company as a side gig in 2001 while working as a private chef at Reynolds Metals. By 2005, "it had gotten so big I went full time." Now its product line includes 11 salsas and three marinades/salad dressings. Gunther's was named after Lampros' brindle boxer, who has since passed away. But the company has a new mascot, a black boxer named Ludwig von Gunther.

Nick Lampros, who lives in Roanoke, is a full-time lawyer who handles the legal documents and provides input on the development of new flavors. Adding ginger to the pineapple salsa was his idea, for example.

The salsas and marinades are currently produced at two factories, one in North Carolina and one in Maryland, Mike Lampros says. He says Gunther's Gourmet products are available in about 38 states. Locally, there's a showroom near Broad Street and Gaskins Road in western Henrico that's open by appointment only, and you can find Gunther's at about 40 stores, including Ukrop's Super Markets, Ellwood Thompson's Natural Market and Good Foods.