

A Bonus Section for Our Mid-Atlantic Readers

Mid-Atlantic Living

PEOPLE & PLACES



Around Your Region

Delaware—Romance-Writing Family

Maryland—Behind Painted Screens

Virginia—Playing the Blues

Washington, D.C.—A Row Revival

...and more

Gunther's Gourmet Groceries' cofounders Nick and Mike Lampros create healthful salsas and sauces in Richmond.

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Southern Living



PHOTOGRAPHS: MARK SANDLIN

Taste for Yourself

You can find Gunther's Gourmet Groceries at food specialty stores throughout Virginia or on the company's Web site, www.gunthersgourmet.com. For more information contact Gunther's Gourmet Groceries, P.O. Box 18215, Richmond VA 23226; (804) 240-1796.

left: Mike, Gunther, and Nick Lampros make up the executive staff of Gunther's Gourmet Groceries.

Growling Gourmet

A Richmond chef and his lawyer brother went to the dogs for their specialty food company.

Mike Lampros stirs a pot on the stove while his business partner snoozes on the floor.

"Hey Gunther, wake up, buddy!" Mike calls. Slowly, the senior member of Gunther's Gourmet Groceries executive team opens one eye, snorts, and goes back to sleep. Already having lent his name to the specialty foods company, the brindle boxer feels he's done his part.



Brotherly Advice

Although Gunther doesn't howl about it, the salsas, vinaigrettes, and marinades that carry his moniker have won praise from food aficionados and health-conscious consumers across the country.

Mike started his business after graduating from the University of Richmond and attending The Culinary Institute of America. "I've always liked Richmond, so four years ago I

came back and took a job as executive chef for the Reynolds Metals Company," Mike says. "That's when I started experimenting with making my own salsas, marinades, and salad dressings."

One of his epicurean experiments resulted in an orange-balsamic vinaigrette marinade. "A food company was having a national recipe contest, so I thought about sending that one in," Mike says. "When I told my brother, Nick, he said I was nuts and that I would lose the rights to the recipe. As a lawyer, he reads the fine print." Nick urged Mike to copyright his recipes and to sell the creations himself. "I went on the Web and found specialty food stores around Virginia," Mike says. "Then I had to come up with a name for the company. I liked the alliteration of 'Gunther's Gourmet Groceries.'" Today the brothers work together to grow the business.

Successful Products

Gunther's goodies now include Mike's original vinaigrette, a lemon-and-oregano variety, and one made with roasted garlic and sun-dried tomatoes. Salsas range from a hearty black-and-white bean mixture to a tropical combination of limes and mangos.

"We go for more flavor and healthier ingredients," explains Mike. "All of our products are fat free and cholesterol free, low in sodium, and made with no chemicals or preservatives."

Hot New Ideas

While Mike still develops his salsas and sauces in Richmond, he gets ideas from around the world. Presently, the brothers are looking at ways to turn up or tone down a salsa's heat by using the right combination of chiles.

In addition, the Lampros support good causes. "We donate part of our profits to animal shelters such as the Richmond Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals," says Mike.

Rising from the floor, Gunther stretches and sniffs. "He handles the fame pretty well," Mike says with a smile. "Sometimes people call and ask to speak with Gunther. I tell them he's too busy to come to the phone."

JAMES T. BLACK