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Kitchen Mishap Leads to Great Salad Dressings

The orange balsamic salad dressing was actually a mistake. Seven years ago, Roanoke native Michael Lampros, the founder and creator of Gunther's Gourmet Groceries, L.L.C., mixed two dressings together to make enough dressing for a 60-person dinner.

The culinary result explodes on the tongue with a spicy, citrusy blast. The practical result is a successful company of one (plus his semi-retired parents, who help with deliveries, in a sort of upside-down version of a family business).

"So much of it was a matter of trial and error," says Lampros, but the results proved otherwise: "People I worked with would take little cups of it home with them. I thought, why not bottle it?"

Lampros attended the University of Richmond and the Culinary School of America, and has been experimenting with dressings and marinades for about a three years. "I started playing around," he says, "and they got really popular."

Lampros takes random shifts from friends at several restaurants while working on his dressings and marinades. "I love the kitchen atmosphere and its artistic



The dressing guy. Michael Lampros – and business namesake Gunther.

flair," he says. "Everyone is there for the same reason."

Lampros' all-natural line of dressings, named for Gunther, his friendly brindle boxer dog, include the orange balsamic dressing and a lemon oregano vinaigrette dressing. The dressings have a shelf life of two years while having no preservatives. The condiments are heart-healthy, low in calories, and are a certified "Virginia's

Finest" product.

Lampros suggests the orange balsamic as a marinade for pork, chicken and seafood as well as a salad dressing while the lemon oregano works well when grilling, baking or broiling poultry, seafood or vegetables. Lampros' two newest dressings are roasted garlic and sundried tomato and Chesapeake Bay crab salsa.

To reach dining tables across the region, Lampros hopes to work with distributors to have about 15 stores in Roanoke stock his product. Currently, 120 stores in Maryland and Virginia carry his dressings.

Lampros plans to experiment with soups once his line of dressings builds up a decent following and eventually plans to donate a portion of his profits to support animal shelters in honor of his dog.

Gunther's Gourmet products can be purchased in Roanoke at Country Corner Farms, Kneadful Things, Montano's Lee & Edwards, Love Baskets, Tinnell's and Windsor Gifts and in Salem at Countryside Classics. Call Michael Lampros at 804/240-1796 or visit www.gunthersgourmet.com.

–Jeff Davis/CEM