

Profile

The Secret Is In The sauce

By Winfred Cross
The BusinessMonthly

Henry Hunter is living in hog heaven -- barbecued hog heaven, that is.

Hunter, who owns Hunter's Down Home Bar-B-Q service, is marketing his own brand of sauce -- "Hunter's Down Home Bar-B-Q Sauce." It's in local Food Lion, and Harris Teeter grocery stores as well as independent stores.

Hunter said military installations are buying it also.

"We're selling it at Ft. Bragg (in Fayetteville), then we're going to Ft. Jackson, Seymour Johnson and Camp Lejeune," he said. The sauce will be sold in commissaries and used in officer's clubs and mess halls.

"They are buying it by the gallon," Hunter said. "We're just getting started. The way I've got it figured, we're doing about \$2,000 a week."

So why is the Army so big on this new product?

"You need to taste it," Hunter says, plugging the product's slogan. "The taste makes it differ-

ent. It's not like your Lexington down east, or your western style. "It's down home style. When you first taste it, you'll get just a little sweetness, then a little tanginess -- then you get this kick, the bite because of the type of spices that I use."

Hunter will not say what spices he uses, but he does say they all come from the Carolinas. He's a member of Goodness Grows, a Carolina based advocacy group that promotes area grown foods.

"I really think its the home grown herbs and spices that makes it so good," he said.

The sauce is pasteurized, cooled to about 185 degrees , then packaged and shipped out from Winston-Salem's Golden Farms. processing plant. The sauce has a shelf life of more than a year and costs between \$1.59 and \$1.99.

Hunter has been making the sauce since 1972. "That's when I bought my first grill," he said. "That was my last year at Hopkins Jr. High in Columbia, S.C. The industrial arts shop made it out of a 55 gallon drum. It's long gone - burned out.

Hunter has made subtle changes to his recipes each year - a new herb here, a deleted spice there - but he hasn't made any changes since 1988.

"That's when my buddy told me 'man, I don't know what you've done, but whatever it is you ought to hold on to it."

Hunter has had a few problems -- like when he had to throw away a number of product labels because the weight was in the wrong spot -- but that hasn't stopped him from pursuing his dream of marketing his sauce.

"On a teacher's salary, that mistake had me eating bolonga sandwiches for a month," he said laughing. "But I wanted to get this on the market because it's such a good product and I didn't want to deprive the world of this product. To bottle this stuff presents an enormous challenge. That's what kept driving me to do this."

Hunter is planning to go national, but at a slow and measured pace. "I think in the next couple of years. I want it in all military institutions and in every major store."

Hunter, originally from Florence, S.C., has lived in Charlotte since 1983. He's now retired from teaching chemistry and biology and has devoted much of his time to promoting his sauce.

He is also a professional actor and has even done his own radio commercials which will soon air on WSOC FM and WPEG-FM 98.

BusinessMonthly

Published the Last Thursday of Each Month
By The Charlotte Post Publishing Company

For More Information Call
376-0496

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USPS No. 965500 Second Class Postage Paid
By The Charlotte Post Publishing Company
Charlotte, N. C. 28203

Postmaster
Send address changes to:
Charlotte Post
P. O. Box 30144
Charlotte, N. C. 28230

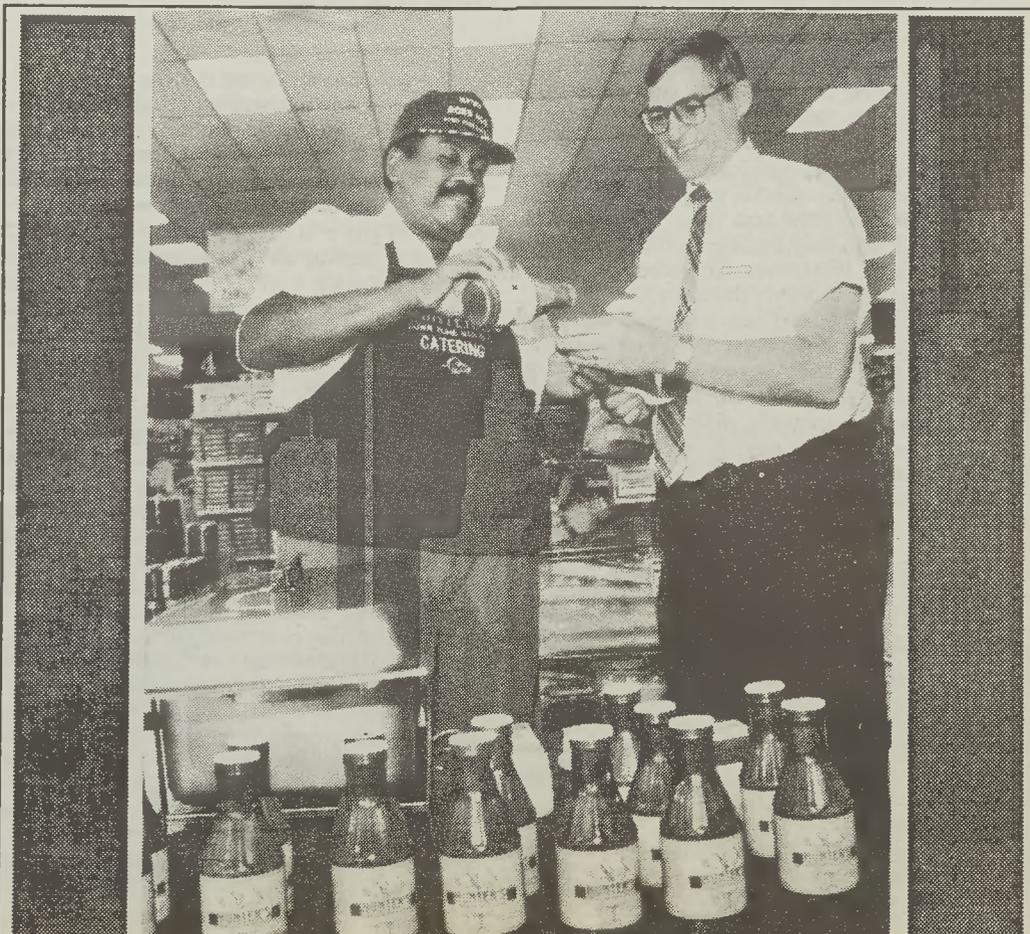


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