

# NEWS RELEASE: For Immediate Release

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## Chez Panisse Alumni Creates New Culinary Ingredient Line The Culinary Collection™ includes herbs, spices, seasonings & cooking ingredients

(Santa Barbara, CA) The leading sentence of a December 4, 2009 Nielsen report states: In today's economy, U.S. consumers continue to feed on a back-to-basics and a "more meals at home" mentality. We all know that many consumers have chosen to save money by cooking at home. The problem is that a lot of people find it difficult to cook and they struggle to make their meals taste good. Brien Seay, formerly of the legendary Chez Panisse in Berkeley, CA, has solved two problems with one product line: The Culinary Collection™ provides an innovative, convenient and low cost way to make meals taste great!

We've all experienced sticker shock when purchasing herbs and seasonings, it is not uncommon to pay upwards of \$6 to \$8 a jar. The question is why are these ingredients so expensive? With a culinary background that includes a number of top restaurants, the California Culinary Academy, and previously founding (and running) award-winning food companies, Seay chose to focus on a solution which is reshaping the entire category . . .

- First, he eliminates glass jars and uses resealable plastic bags. This not only cuts costs but allows customers to reuse old jars, if they so choose (note: for those looking for a better spice jar, he created the Big Mouth™ jar, a stylish, mid-sized reusable glass jar with a low profile, antiqued lid and two inch opening for easy access).
- Second, with a working knowledge of the finest culinary ingredients and worldwide connections, Seay sources products directly, ensuring freshness, high quality, consistency and reasonable prices.
- Finally, he uses his culinary experience to produce some 60 Culinary Collection™ products: from enhanced familiar mixes, like Tandoori Spice and Herbs of Provence, to more unique combinations, like Sushi Salt (made with toasted Nori and Wasabi), Cajun Curry (a mild basil-based curry) and spicy Chipotle & Cilantro. For the experienced cooks there are also some hard to find ingredients, like: Marash Chilies, Smoked Sun-Dried Tomatoes, Dried Shallots, Long Pepper, Smoked Paprika, Asafoetida, and American Pumpkin Powder.

All this for a suggested retail of \$2.89 for basic herbs and spices, and \$3.79 for spice mixes and the more exotic culinary ingredients. In most cases this is 50% less than comparable quantities from larger companies!

While classically trained in traditional French and Italian cuisines, and exposed to the ample use of butter and cream, Seay's personal preferences are decidedly more healthy. Working at Chez Panisse, the birthplace of California Cuisine, he learned to focus on fresh, locally available ingredients. His first national foray into the packaged goods business included creating the award-winning Crunchies®, the first retail pack freeze-dried snack food line. His current business, Blackbird Food Company, is centered around all-natural, affordable, culinary ingredients.

“This is an natural, eco-friendly line that focuses on flavor, quality and value,” states Brien Seay, President of Blackbird Food Co.. He continues, “You never need chemicals to make food taste good. The key is to start with flavorful ingredients—and if necessary, perform a little natural culinary magic, like roasting spices or herbs, to enhance their flavor a little bit.”

Only 5 of the sixty products have any salt. With so many people concerned about their sodium intake, Seay felt it best to let the customer decide how much—if any—salt they want to use. There are no anti-caking chemicals, no sugar, no wheat, no sulphur, no MSG or citric acid in any of the mixes. Most of the herbs are Kosher and all are certified non-GMO and non-irradiated. Seay roasts and mills his own spices and uses organic products when they provide the best quality and flavor.

These health-related things are what you can't see but what you can see is the quality. With big clear bag showcasing the products (instead of hiding them behind labels or in tin containers) Seay wants you to be able to see what you are buying. It doesn't hurt too that the packaging has a fresh look and original recipes for each of the products and chef's tips are included.

Speaking of health, everyone knows that herbs and spices add flavor but few realize that many contribute substantial health benefits. Take turmeric for instance, curcumin, a pigment that gives turmeric its yellow color, in a recent study by the University of Michigan, was shown to reduce the risk of breast cancer by stopping the growth of cancer prone stem cells. According to researchers at the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre of the Toronto General Hospital, curcumin has also shown promise in lowering the risk of heart failure and studies published in the American Journal of Epidemiology indicate its use lessens cognitive decline attributed to aging. Peperine, found in black pepper, was found to have a similar effects.

Certain herbs and spices are also antioxidant powerhouses. One teaspoon of cinnamon for instance, has the same amount of antioxidants as half a cup of blueberries or one cup of pomegranate juice! And one teaspoon of oregano has the equivalent antioxidant power of 3 cups of broccoli. Additional studies have proven certain herbs and spices (turmeric, ginger, cayenne and basil) have anti-inflammatory properties and others can assist in weight (cayenne) and blood glucose management (cinnamon).

“Herbs and Spices don't just add flavor, they add valuable nutrition and in some cases are genuine superfoods,” states Seay. He adds, “Consumers look to herbs and spices to enhance the flavor of their foods but they often don't realize that they are adding key vitamins, minerals and anti-oxidants as well. It is a nice fringe benefit and consistent with our company's commitment to bring great-tasting, innovative, nutrient dense foods to the consumer.”

Seay's companies have been supplying the finest natural dried fruits and vegetables on the market since 1994, and he is committed to great-tasting healthy food produced in a sustainable way. He also believes that good food starts at the source. That's why Fit Superfoods buys all their ingredients from growers and suppliers with the highest integrity and all products are packaged in-house under the strictest quality control. Seay founded the first company to develop and market a number of innovative new freeze-dried products and the first to come out with a comprehensive organic freeze-dried snack food line. He has received numerous awards, including Nutrition Business Journal's award for product merit and The Central Coasts' Innovative Business Award. His products have received critical acclaim from Bon Appetit, the Associated Press, Prevention, Vegetarian Times, Sports Illustrated for Women, Men's Health and over 200 other periodicals.

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