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Adams spices up lives for 125 years, particularly with its vanilla extract (Video)



The Adams Extract & Spice Company, which currently has a 90,000-square-foot, 11-acre facility in Gonzales, will turn 125 next year.

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Gheni Platenburg • Originally published April 19, 2012 at midnight, updated April 22, 2012 at 7:44 a.m.

GONZALES - From licking the cake batter off a spoon in grandma's kitchen to calming a crying baby by adding a few drops to its bottle, the alluring, sweet taste of Adams Best Vanilla Extract has created timeless memories for its users over the years.

Sterling Crim is no exception.

Around the age of 7, Crim lived in Goosebay, Labrador, where his father was stationed at the local U.S. Air Force base.

His mother, who was a native Texan, would mix the vanilla extract, which she had mailed to her from Texas, with sugar, milk and snow to make homemade ice cream.

"I'd never seen anything like that," said Crim, who likened the taste to H-E-B's 1905 old-fashioned vanilla ice cream recipe. "I associate that flavor of Adams Best with ice cream."

It was a taste that stuck with Crim, who now serves as one of the five managing partners of the Adams Extract & Spice Company.

"We love this brand," Crim said enthusiastically from the Gonzales company's meeting room. "We all remember this product long before we could talk."

Founded in 1888, Adams is one of the oldest continuously operated companies in Texas and one of oldest spice and extract companies in the United States.

Next year will mark the company's 125th anniversary.



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HISTORY

1888 was a good year for John Anderson Adams.

That year, he began making and selling extracts in Battle Creek, Mich., and even co-invented Adamur Green Plant Sarsaparilla, the predecessor to what is now known as Adams Best Vanilla.

The family later moved to Beeville because of his wife's health.

In an effort to please his wife, who was unhappy with the quality of vanilla products available in the area, Adams formulated one for her.

When his wife tried the product, she said, "Well, that's old man Adam's best," hence the vanilla's name, said Annie Ortega, brand communications and media coordinator for Adams Extract & Spice Company.

With the help of his sons, Fred and Don Adams, John Adams began to produce, package, and sell the vanilla extract door-to-door with a complete money back guarantee

In 1955, the company built a new plant, designed by the famous architecture firm Lundgren and Maurer, on Interstate 35, near Austin.

The company expanded to spice production in 1959.

The Adams Extract building continued production near Austin under the direction of John G. Adams Sr. until 2002, when the company was purchased by Central Texas Ingredients and relocated to its current 11-acre, 90,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in Gonzales.

The company employs 109 people companywide including 67 in Gonzales and 40 independent sales distributors throughout the state.

SMELLS LIKE SUCCESS

Just one step into the Adams Extract & Spice Company production area, the noses of both employees and visitors alike are immediately hijacked by the aromatic remnants of sweet and spicy smells.

Two weeks after the rigorous Easter production demands, the sounds of machines running and workers running about are at a minimum, as production has now hit one of the slower points of the year.

Adams turns inventory out about 24 times a year, meaning they make it and immediately move it out.

Not many finished products sit idle on the shelves.

While the brand is particularly popular in Southern states, they have customers nationwide, partly because of consumers' ability to order the products online.

In addition to its Adams Best Vanilla, Adams produces a full line of spices and food coloring.

Adams Extract is the No. 2 extract brand in the nation, offering vanilla, lemon and almond extracts, among others.

The company operates under three divisions: retail, industrial and private label brands.

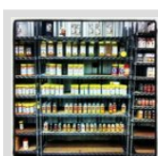
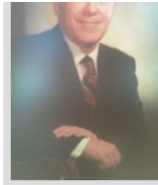
The retail division handles the company's own brand of Pantry Basics, A-Z Spices and Culinary Tonight.

While the industrial division provides custom-blended and custom-packaged seasonings and flavors to manufacturers in the commercial food industry, the private labels division creates spices, blends and extracts to be sold under the labels of other companies.

"Just to be part of the growth and expansion has been exciting," said Jeff Cernosek, total quality management coordinator for Adams.

For their spices, Crim said they ship in raw materials from locations all over the world including Madagascar, India, China, Indonesia and Vietnam.

Despite the trend of spice companies outsourcing packaging and



returning to other countries, Crim said his company prefers to perform those tasks in-house.

Nearly 850,000 pounds of pepper is grounded at the Gonzales facility annually.

"We have thought about it, but we can do it better here," said Crim. "There are not many companies that can say that."

Local products and local jobs are a major asset in the eyes of the Gonzales Economic Development Council, said Carolyn Gibson-Baros, director of the council.

"Adams is one of our anchor businesses. We have several very large companies that provide jobs for a lot of people," said Gibson-Baros. "Adams is a very generous community partner. We are very fortunate and blessed to have them here."

It serves as a traveling advertisement for the city. Every Adams product has "Made in Gonzales" on the back of the bottle or box, she said.

Crim named McCormick, ACH, Spice Island, Tony Chachere's, Emeril's and Mrs. Dash as some of the company's biggest competitors.

A NEW YOU

The average American consumes about 6 to 18 grams, or one to three teaspoons, of ordinary table salt daily, exceeding the American Heart Association's upper limit for healthy Americans at 2,300 mg, about one teaspoon of salt, daily.

Through its new healthy eating campaign, Adams seeks to help Americans become healthier.

"It's all about the food," said Crim, as he described Adams' new motto. "We're bringing back the love in the kitchen."

Adams hopes to draw consumers away from fast food chains and packaged meals and back into their kitchens with fresh foods and spices.

"We set out to revitalize, re-energize," said Crim.

FRIENDS WITH FLAVOR

Fans of Adams spices and extracts can friend the company on Facebook and follow them on Twitter.

The company embraces new media as part of its game plan to expand.

All marketing for the company is handled by the company's Design, Innovation, Communication and Education (D.I.C.E.) office in San Antonio.

The 124-year-old company also interacts with consumers by posting how-to videos on YouTube and recipes on Pinterest.

In 2009, the movie "Extract" was released and based on the childhood memories creator and director Mike Judge had of the Adams Extract Plant in Austin.

Additionally, in July, Adams Best Vanilla and six other extracts and food colors were added as a feature product in the popular Apple iTunes app, "Cupcakes!"

Adams' embracing of new technologies does not stop at its marketing techniques.

Most of Adams' productions are computer automated.

THE FUTURE

"We believe we'll easily be double the size we are today. We would like to be one of the top spice companies in America," said Crim, as he described the company's future goals. "We're well on track to doing that."

"Our goal is to see it go another 125 years."

Because Adams is a privately held company, Crim declined to provide any revenue figures, but he did say they were turning a profit.

"There's a lot of negative talk about business today. Big banks probably didn't do the right things for consumers, but don't throw the baby out with the bath water," said Crim. "We're here for our



COMPANY MILESTONE

1888: Battle Creek, Mich. - John Adams co-invents Adamur
1905: John Adams and family move to Beeville and create Adams Best Vanilla
1917: Fred W. Adams (second generation) purchase the company from his father
1922: Fred W. Adams move the ...

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Company Stats:

Began acquisition and move of Adams Extract & Spice Company in October 2002
Moved from Austin to Gonzales
Located in the Gonzales Industrial Center
11-acre, 90,000-square-foot manufacturing facility
Adams Extract is the No. 2 extract brand in the nation
Employs 67 people in Gonzales, with ...

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PRODUCTS

Adams Extract & Spice LLC manufactures and markets under several Adams Brand banners, including Adams Best, Adams Extract, Adams ClearVan, Adams Seasoning & Spice, Adams Reserve, Flavor King, Adams Pantry Basics, Sear-n-Crust, Zesty-Full, Parslic, Carniceria and Culinary Tonight. In ...

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families, our customers and our community. That's what business is all about."

A big proponent of being involved in the community, Crim said Adams gives back to Gonzales through scholarships and other efforts.

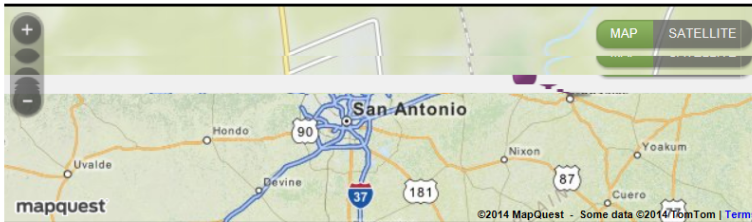
He declined to provide specifics.

Crim attributed Adams philanthropic efforts to consumers buying local.

"We encourage people to vote with their pocketbook," said Crim. "Buy Texas."

In addition to quality materials, a large consumer base and an embrace of new technologies, Jennifer Hawkes, director of human resources and payroll and risk management for Adams, shared one other important ingredient for the company's current and future success.


"Happy people make great stuff," she said.



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