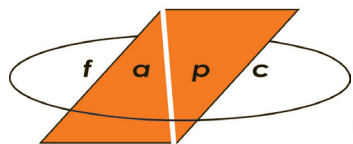


Food & Agricultural Products Center



FLASH!!

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY™

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FAPC Raises the Bar

Bar 19...From Counter Sales to Company Success

STILLWATER, Okla. – The Pullen family has made jerky for family and friends for years, but the idea of making their hobby a profitable business did not present itself until the family was involved in another business venture—a video game store.

Bobby Pullen of McAlester, Okla. owned and operated a video game store. His father, Harry, suggested putting a container of jerky on the counter to give his customers an added service.

“The jerky sales did well and soon people were coming in just to buy the jerky,” Pullen said. “I began taking special orders and soon realized I had a product that was in major demand.”

To develop a business plan for the jerky business, Pullen went to the McAlester branch of the Kiamichi Technology Center and met with Karl Scifres, the small business counselor. Scifres put Pullen in contact with the Food & Agricultural Products Center on the Oklahoma State University campus in Stillwater.

Pullen enrolled in the FAPC Basic Training Workshop for food business entrepreneurs and met with Corey Stone, FAPC business planning and marketing specialist. Stone helped Pullen focus on what products he specifically wanted to manufacture.

“Planning a business is a lot like planning a trip,” Stone said. “The business plan serves as a road

map—outlining what routes to take and which sites to see—on how to get from Point A to Point B in the most efficient manner.”

Pullen wrote his business plan and was able to receive an agricultural diversification grant and a small business associates grant to begin construction of his facility. The plant was operational in 1997, and within the first six months, Bar 19 had 200 clients.

Pullen used his small town connections to help him enter a larger market when he was able to gain space in the McAlester Wal-Mart. With help from manager Jack Inman, Bar 19’s signature brand, GrandPa’s Jerky, is in more than 100 Wal-Mart stores throughout most of Oklahoma and the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

“My main focus is the expansion of the GrandPa’s brand products into western Oklahoma and the Texas and Arkansas areas,” Pullen said. “We are hoping to launch a new label into Texas.”

Pullen’s goal is to have GrandPa’s Jerky in all 50 states. GrandPa’s Jerky is found in 500 retail outlets, but he would like to see the brand become more global.

Today, Bar 19 has three full-time salespeople and between nine to 15 employees depending on the season. Bar 19 prides themselves in making a home-style product, not mass-produced.

Pullen said Bar 19 is still family owned, and his dad is still a big part of the company, only now as their jerky connoisseur.

“Dad keeps us in line on the taste; he is our jerky consultant,” Pullen said.

Bar 19 uses a specific cut of meat in their recipe. The inside round beef roast cut is the leanest, and Pullen believes it is the best cut of meat for their product.

With the help of Tim Bowser, FAPC food process engineer, Pullen was able to increase production allowing Bar 19 to dry more than one ton of raw meat per week at the facility.

Pullen said that although the price is not as low as some national brands of jerky, GrandPa’s Jerky exceeds the other brands in quality. Pullen stands behind his product, and looking at his increase in sales, so does his customers.

“Bar 19 produces high quality products,” Pullen said. “And, I believe I have the best customers in the world.”

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