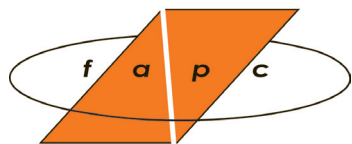


# Food & Agricultural Products Center



## FLASH!!

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY™

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## Blessetti's Takes Gourmet Markets by Storm

STILLWATER, Okla. – There is more to Blessetti's Gourmet Italian Pasta Sauce than tomato sauce and spices. The American dream and family heritage are also mixed into the recipe.

After years of smelling the aroma of the pasta sauce while being cooked, Judy Scovil's family of Tulsa told Scovil she should commercially market her sauce. Scovil had only made the sauce for her family and friends and never dreamed about selling the product.

With the help of the Food & Agricultural Products Center in Stillwater, Blessetti's Gourmet Italian Pasta Sauce is succeeding in the gourmet grocery market.

After Scovil and her husband Jim attended a Basic Training Workshop, a monthly entrepreneurial workshop hosted by the FAPC, the Scovils started working with several FAPC members to learn what it takes to be an entrepreneur.

Members from the FAPC helped the Scovils locate a co-packer, understand the financial side of the business, market their product and fine-tune the recipe so it would have a longer shelf life.

"They were just a tremendous help," Scovil said. "I don't know what we would have done without them. They have basically been our mentors from the word go."

Corey Stone, FAPC business planning and marketing specialist, said the main reason the Scovils have been so successful is because of good business planning.

"They understood what they wanted their product to be," Stone said. "They researched the market, they wrote their business plan and more importantly, continue to revise it as they learn more."

Stone said most of the FAPC clients have great products, but few are able to maintain the business focus to make that product work for them.

"The Scovils understood from the beginning that this was a business opportunity, and that no matter how great their product was, no one would ever taste it if they didn't prepare their business first."

The Scovils started working with a trademark attorney to help name and trademark their company. One year later, after plenty of thinking and praying, Blessetti's was born. The name means "seven blessings."

It took five years, but the Scovils were finally ready to sell their product. In the middle of planning a marketing strategy, Scovil was asked to participate in the 2003 Chef Fest at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Tulsa. This was when fate and opportunity collided with Scovil.

A representative from The Market, an upscale gourmet grocery store in Tulsa, walked up to Scovil as she was talking about the product and handing out samples.

"He said he was very impressed and very excited about us," Scovil said.

The representative handed her his card and asked if she had ever heard of The Market. Ironically, Scovil had been planning to meet with representatives from the store and discuss the possibility of carrying Scovil's product.

Currently, Blessetti's Gourmet Italian Pasta Sauce can be found at The Market in Tulsa; Rogers, Ark.; and Chicago.

The Scovils recently attended the opening of the Chicago branch Market to display their products. Scovil described

the Chicago branch as the crème de la crème of all the stores. Blessetti's Gourmet Italian Pasta Sauce may also be found soon in other Market stores, which will be opening in Des Moines, Iowa and Kansas City.

The product has only been on the market for approximately nine months but is carried in seven stores. Other than the three branches of The Market, Blessetti's Gourmet Italian Pasta Sauce can be found in Petty's Fine Foods, LaDonna's Fancy Foods and two Hamlet stores, all located in Tulsa.

The pasta sauce is available in two flavors: Savory Roast Beef and Vegetable Medley and is available online at [www.blessettis.com](http://www.blessettis.com). The Scovils are currently working on developing four other flavors.

The history of this special sauce goes all the way back to the immigration of Scovil's grandparents from Sicily. The recipe is her grandmothers and has been handed down through the family. Scovil said she has tweaked the recipe to satisfy personal taste.

The ingredients in the sauce are of the highest quality. The sauce has undergone a critique by Italians who are well versed in the culinary arts. The culinary experts told Scovil that she has a quality product and needs to stay in country clubs, gourmet stores, caterers and fine restaurants.

Stone said Blessetti's is definitely a gourmet product, and to bring a product of that quality to the consumer and still make it affordable is quite a feat.

"Add the fact that they only use real roast in their meat sauce, as opposed to some textured protein supplement, and the task is even more daunting," Stone said. "Yet, the Scovils refused to compromise and will probably realize a dream come true because of it. Their vision and perseverance is a great example for other small Oklahoma businesses to follow."

What makes this sauce so good besides the quality ingredients? There is a little more to each jar than meets the eye. There is a little love and Scovil family heritage in each container.

"I love Sicilian heritage, and I love the family traditions," Scovil said. "That's what we're all about at Blessetti's Italian Gourmet Pasta Sauce. We want to not only produce high quality authentic Italian sauce for our customers, but want to give them a taste of our own table."

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