

Jude's Foods Gluten-Free Cookies Fill a Need

It started with the search for a perfect gluten-free cookie. Josh Fegles and his wife Bethany, who had recently gone gluten-free as a response to their son Jude's health concerns, discovered how hard it was to find delicious baked goods that fit their new dietary restrictions.

Having given up on his search to find tasty gluten-free cookies, Josh set about inventing a gluten-free cookie recipe of his own. Just like that, gluten and dairy-free baking company Jude's Foods was born.



Unexpected entrepreneurship

"I never wanted to be an entrepreneur," said Josh. "I was always the company man and I love clocking in, showing up, getting the job done."

Like many businesses, Jude's Foods was created to fill a need. The Fegles wanted to make something delicious that they could all enjoy, and that desire to create a product their family loved led to the creation of Jude's Foods, which they named for their son. "I discovered entrepreneurship in a way by accident, because I had made this great cookie on a whim, really," Josh said. "I thought, 'Oh yeah, I should try and sell it,' and I didn't really know what that meant."

The task of getting to market

To go about getting his new gluten-free treats to market, Josh turned to Portland Community College's Small Business Development Center, and joined the "Getting Your Recipe to Market" class — a natural fit for a new bakery hoping to develop its product.

"The 'Getting Your Recipe to Market' class through PCC's SBDC was exactly what I needed when I was starting out," Fegles said. "I had no idea that I'd have to learn things like how to convert a recipe to a scalable formula, or how to find contract manufacturers and distributors. In a few short months, I had been exposed to everything I needed to know to get started with my food business."

Not only did the class give Josh the tools he needed to create and sell his product, the SBDC gave him guidance and help when it came to setting up his new company, an area where many new entrepreneurs struggle to gain footing. While many new food businesses have difficulty getting their goods onto grocery shelves, PCC's "Getting Your Recipe to Market" course helped Josh navigate the process easily.

"In addition to all the training they give you, they are in a partnership with New Seasons Market," Josh said. "What New Seasons does at the end of the program is give folks an opportunity to simulate a buying experience, where you sit down with actual New Seasons buyers, and pitch your product." The local grocer was taken with the product, and invited Josh to sell Jude's

Foods merchandise in their stores.

Josh credits his experience with the SBDC and its course, offered through PCC, for much of his success. “Getting Your Recipe to Market’ and ongoing business advising have been critical pillars in the creation of my business,” Fegles said. “Without it, I most likely wouldn’t be in business. I probably wouldn’t have even known where to start.”

Growing gluten-free

As Jude’s Foods has continued to grow, Josh has focused on expanding his processes, which included moving out of the commercial space in a gluten-free baking facility, and hiring manufacturers to produce the product for them. This marks a success point for the Fegles, according to Josh. “My goal for several years was not to be a baker, but to be a business owner,” he said. “A huge milestone for the business was to get to the point where that would be my role, someone who manages a business rather than bakes.”

In addition to growing in size, the business has also grown in scope. As Jude’s Foods has continued to expand, Josh has focused evermore on the financial side of the business, to make sure everything is running smoothly. It was through the SBDC that Josh started using LivePlan, a software designed to help small business owners pitch, plan, and track their businesses.

“My SBDC consultant introduced me to LivePlan by suggesting I sign up for a business planning class,” said Josh. Through his use of LivePlan, Jude’s Foods has experienced nearly doubled sales. “It’s because of my SBDC consultant that I learned about LivePlan,” said Josh. “I loved the app so much that I reached out to the makers of the product, to let them know I wanted to help spread the word to other small business advisors, consultants, and instructors.”

Seeking success through collaboration

Josh attributes much of Jude’s Foods success to his ability to learn from industry experts who have come before him. “Our success starts with our openness to the expertise of others,” he said. “From the outset I relied on family, friends, industry experts, and others who have expertise as successful food entrepreneurs.”

With help from experts at the SBDC, Josh learned how to successfully build his new company. “Stay teachable, and always remain willing to learn and adjust on the go,” he advised. “I think the nuts and bolts of my big takeaway on my experience is how invaluable it is to reach out for help.”