

# Naturally Healthy

## Dress It Up Dressing Glamorizes a Salad

BY LORRIE BAUMANN

Dress It Up Dressing is a line of salad dressings originally designed to accommodate the dietary needs of a family member who was cutting down on added sugars. That happened when Sophia Maroon's father was diagnosed as pre-diabetic, which inspired Maroon's mother, Suzy, to pay really close attention to what her family was eating. Maroon's mother couldn't find a sugar-free salad dressing that she liked, so she invented her own recipe.

Years later, Maroon was still making and serving her mother's red wine vinaigrette salad dressing, and when she started thinking about a career change in 2012, the idea of that salad dressing kept resurfacing, according to Taylor Bagen, who is now Dress It Up Dressing's Brand Development Manager.

She started making the salad dressing and selling it to friends and family, who were placing orders in such volume that she had to keep going back to her local Whole Foods store to pick up the wooden clementine boxes in which she was packing her jars for deliveries. One day, the Team Leader at Whole Foods asked her what she was using all those boxes for. When Maroon explained her salad dressing project, she was invited to let Whole Foods in on

the action. "When Whole Foods tried the dressing, they said 'We don't sell anything like this, and we should.' With that endorsement, Sophia got serious and started formalizing Dress It Up Dressing," Bagen said. "She was right – the response was phenomenal."

A few years later, Dress It Up Dressing has added Ranch, Caesar and Sesame Tahini dressings to the original vinaigrettes, for a total of seven varieties now in the line. All are made with the same kind of quality



ingredients that characterized the original dressing created by Maroon's mother. They use no xanthan gum or other fillers. "We make sure that the ingredients for the dressings are all things you can recognize, pronounce and you probably have in your kitchen," Bagen said.

Four of the dressings are completely sugar free, while the others have less than 1 gram of sugar per tablespoon. Olive oil is the base for all of the dressings, with a touch of sesame oil added to Sesame Tahini for its flavor. Five of the dressings are vegan, and all of them are gluten free.

"When Sophia started out making Dress It Up, she didn't set out to make them gluten free, low-carb, Whole 30-compliant or any of those things. She really just recreated her mom's classic recipe using simple, pure ingredients, and by doing it, the product ended up checking all those boxes anyway," Bagen said. "We like to emphasize that that's the beauty of clean, whole food. When you use real ingredients, you automatically set yourself up to be accommodating to all kinds of specialty diets."

"It then translates into being incredibly versatile. They're wonderful as a dip or marinade or to drizzle on top of a rice bowl," she continued. "It has really replaced so many products in my kitchen that were just clogging up space."

The new Sesame Tahini Dressing, added to the line this spring, won a 2018 Good Food Award as well as a soft Award. "That was really exciting for us, and we saw a lot of growth following those awards," Bagen said.

The company has also been recognized as a certified B Corporation, with third-party accreditation for its social and environmental efforts as well as standards for public transparency and legal accountability. "That allowed us to balance our profit with our mission and our purpose," Bagen

said. Dress It Up Dressing's mission is to be a company that benefits employees, the community and the planet by supporting food education, the local food movement, sustainable farming practices, efficient food distribution and access to healthy food for children, she said.

A good example of this is the company's partnership with D.C. Central Kitchen, a community kitchen with a mission is to use food as a tool to strengthen bodies, empower minds and build communities. The D.C. Central Kitchen partners with Washington, D.C. public schools with the goal of getting healthy food to kids at school, and Dress It Up Dressing provides salad dressing for the effort. "They get their vegetables at lunch; they taste much better, and they're not covered in sugar and unhealthy oil," Bagen said. "The mission to improve child nutrition is fundamentally important to our company. We think it's necessary to instill healthy eating habits from a young age so these habits just become second nature as they continue to grow."

The Dress It Up Dressings are packaged in 10-ounce bottles that retail for \$7.99. They're currently distributed in 27 states across the country with the goal of establishing the products as a truly national brand. They're currently sold in Whole Foods, Central Market in Texas and at all the Fresh Market locations and are soon to be available online through Kroger Ship, and Amazon. For more information, visit [www.dressitupdressing.com](http://www.dressitupdressing.com). **GN**

## Honey Mama's Sweet and Soft

BY LORRIE BAUMANN

Christy Goldsby knew she had a product she loved in her hands the first time she tasted the results of a test batch of what has become her Honey Mama's Cacao-Nectar Bars. "The second I ate the first bite of the bar, I saw the packaging in my mind and knew it was going to be a great idea," she said. "I took it to my dance class, and they loved it, and then I took it to my mom because I have so much respect for her as a baker.... It has an Old World rustic appeal that kind of reminded me of a panforte or a wonderful Italian Torrone."

Goldsby is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Honey Mama's, which launched in 2013 at the Portland Farmers Market with four flavors of her raw bars. Almost six years in, her company now employs 32 full-time staff and Honey Mama's is sold in 1,700 grocery stores nationwide.

The idea for the bars came after Goldsby had begun suffering from food allergies that brought home to her that what she ate had a profound effect on how she felt. "It was a huge moment for me," she said. "How I ate absolutely affected my state of health."

At the time, she'd left behind the family



baking business in which she'd been working for the past few years, and she was looking for another business that she could start on her own. "I wanted something to do with food, but I wanted to intersect it with wellness because both of those things were very meaningful to me," she said.

Then, while she was searching for that next great idea, a friend of hers offered,

"this wonderful little treat without the cheat, which was a raw-food, coconut oil-laden protein bar with nourishing, delicious ingredients," she said. "I ate it, and knew this was close to the idea I wanted to do."

She didn't want to copy that product exactly, though – she just wanted to borrow some of the important concepts behind it. "It was too protein-focused for me," she said. "I wanted to do something that was more on the indulgence side." That was in 2009, and that moment launched Goldsby into product development for a raw bar that would be sweet and creamy and delicious. "I always knew that honey was going to be the primary sweetener because it was the thing that my body loved the most," she said. "I combined honey with cocoa powder with some co-

conut oil for creaminess...."

By 2013, the first four Honey Mama's products were ready for the Portland Farmers Market. Today, the line includes eight flavors of the fudgy treats, including Peruvian Raw, CocoNoNut, Lavender Red Rose and Nibs & Coffee, with Ginger Cardamom Cacao-Nectar Bar the newest. They're all honey-cocoa bars made from five whole foods: virgin coconut oil, cocoa powder, Himalayan pink salt and either sprouted almonds or shredded coconut along with a few flavoring ingredients. They're each 2.5 ounces and retail for \$5.99 from the refrigerated grab and go shelves at grocery markets. A smaller single serving size bar is in the next offering in line. "They're in the refrigerated section because we use coconut oil, so they fit into the fresh snacking area," Goldsby said. "We are one of the few brands that sits on the grab and go shelf that represents a clean label indulgence.... It's a very unique, whole food, luxurious treat." **GN**