

Get Snacking

FAPC develops new peanut butter snack

Peanut butter lovers, rejoice! A new peanut butter snack developed on Oklahoma State University's campus may soon hit grocery store shelves near you.

Danielle Bellmer, OSU Robert M. Kerr Food and Agricultural Products Center food process engineer, and William McGlynn, FAPC horticulture products processing specialist, have developed an affordable, tasty and convenient peanut butter product.

In 1999, they originally created "peanut butter slices," which provided customers

with an easier way to make a peanut butter sandwich, Bellmer said. They successfully licensed the product and had negotiated a contract with Wal-Mart when the packaging company went on strike and the project came to a halt.

"The project just sort of fell apart, and we never pursued it again," she said.

However, about two years ago, the pair decided to restart with a new perspective, McGlynn said. Through an entrepreneurial and business planning course at OSU and

the pair's partnership with Innovation to Enterprise in Oklahoma City, they found customers were no longer interested in the original product.

"As part of the course, we had to actively call people to ask if they would buy the product," Bellmer said. "We discovered people were more interested in a healthy, high-protein snack, rather than a slice."

Richard Gajan, Thoma Family clinical assistant professor for the OSU Spears School of Business and the instructor of the entre-



These peanut butter snacks are high in protein, making them a healthier alternative to other salty snacks on the market. *Photo by Katie McKinley.*

preneurial and business planning course, said the pair looked at many potential customer bases and the answers were similar.

“We looked at parents, schools, college students and prisons,” he said. “Then, we interviewed them all.

“Parents said they would not buy the slices because it is really not hard to make a peanut butter sandwich and the texture bothered them,” he said. “College kids said they would buy it for a snack to eat on the way to class.”

Gajan said schools were more interested in a healthy vending-machine snack and prisons were not interested at all. After hearing the results, Gajan, Bellmer and McGlynn came to the same conclusion, he said.

“That is where the idea for the ‘PB Power Bites’ came from,” Bellmer said, “though we do not have an official name for them yet.”

Bellmer and McGlynn said they had pilot runs for the product done at Cerreta’s Candy Co. in Glendale, Ariz.

“They have run several batches,” Bellmer said. “Results from the sensory evaluations of the test batches were all good. People seem to like the taste and texture.”

Bellmer said every consumer is different. Some like higher sugar content, and some like a lot of salt. She said their goal is to make the product taste and act just like regular peanut butter.

“The product is 80 percent peanut butter, and we added pea protein and peanut flour to make it higher protein,” she said. “We also added an enzyme and gum to help stabilize the moisture so the product will not stick to the wrapper.

“We are thinking about selling a package

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of five to six bites for about \$2,” she said. “This would compete with current protein bars on the market.”

McGlynn said FAPC was an enormous help in creating the initial product. Working there has been an advantage, he said.

“We have access to all of the FAPC equipment and facilities,” he said. “Not only that, but also we have access to the other people who work at FAPC.

“More heads are better than fewer when it comes to a lot of the technical issues that may arise,” he said. “There are a lot of resources at FAPC, and we have certainly drawn from them as we have gone through this project.”

Though most of the effort for this product has come from Bellmer and McGlynn, one part of the process is out of their control. The only thing standing in the way of manufacturing and selling the product is the patent, Bellmer said.

Russell Hopper, senior licensing associate

for the OSU Technology Development Center, is working on the patent and licensing agreement for the snack.

“We have filed for two patents that are in the process of being prosecuted,” he said.

He said the TDC has sent samples for evaluation and a few potential commercializers are interested in the product.

“We are waiting to hear from their evaluation, and they are waiting to see how the patent process goes,” he said. “Once everything falls into place, hopefully, we will find someone who wants to manufacture and license the snack.”

Bellmer said an international company is interested in the product.

“The company wants to market the product in other parts of the world,” she said. “They want to do slices and bites.”

Bellmer and McGlynn both said every one involved with the project hopes to see the snack on store shelves soon.

Once the technical side is settled, McGlynn said they will focus on marketing and trying to get the product in stores. Once that is done, half the royalties will go to OSU and half will go to the inventors, according to OSU’s new policy.

“Hopefully, you will be able to purchase the product in the future,” McGlynn said. 



KATIE MCKINLEY
FREDERICK, OKLA.



William McGlynn (left) and Danielle Bellmer are working to bring a new peanut butter snack to store shelves soon. Photo by Katie McKinley.