

Beachy Cream Organic Ice Cream – Mini Case Study



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Inspired by ice-cream-fueled summers on Cape Cod, hip coastal surfers, signature family recipes, and made with the concentrated flavors of 100% organic ingredients, our founder Ann Ryan, and her daughter Beth Stockwell, have created what many are touting as “the perfect ice cream sandwich.” They make their ice cream in small batches, with locally sourced, sustainable, organic ingredients.

“Our philosophy is that ice cream should be a fun experience, where customers don’t have to worry about what’s in their frozen treats. Because of this, we use only 100% organic ingredients to create our smooth and creamy signature ice cream.”

1. In what year did your company begin operation?

I started experimenting with different ice cream flavors in my home kitchen during the summer of 2009. My daughter and business partner, Beth Stockwell, calls me a “mad scientist.” At first I thought about doing non-dairy/vegan flavors (my favorite was curry with a chutney swirl), but with an eye towards garnering a large share of the market, I decided to start with traditional ice cream – albeit with a twist – all organic and flavored with hand-made syrups for a concentrated flavor profile.

2. How do you define success? Are you “there” yet?

Success to me means doing what I love and sharing it with others who appreciate it, so yes, I am successful. Of course, financial rewards are nice to have too, and they tend to validate what one is trying to do. Seeing the growth we’ve had over the past 5 years, we are successful in that area too, but our plan is to be a nationally distributed organic specialty ice cream and we’re still working on that.

3. How long did it take to be successful? What challenges did you face in establishing your company?

I guess that depends upon how success is defined. In my case, I was fortunate that my flavors – especially the ice cream sandwiches – resonated with customers immediately. I started selling from a cart at the Malibu (CA) Farmers Market, and then in local stores. Our interesting flavor pairings, such as *our Ginger Wipeout (candied ginger ice cream on molasses spice cookies – my grandmother’s recipe) and Key Lime Cowabunga (key lime ice cream on coconut oatmeal cookies)* combined with our vintage, surf-inspired, pinup branding attracted a lot of attention, and we developed a loyal following.

My first challenge was finding a place where we could legally make ice cream. Before we had our own store, we rented a catering kitchen part-time and had to build a small “clean room” in the middle of it that met the California Department of Food and Agriculture’s requirements for a “Frozen Milk Products Plant”.

Today’s challenges are mostly production capacity, which is why we’re building out our own 13,000 square foot production facility in Long Beach, California. Lots of food businesses use co-packers, but we don’t because we have a unique process and want to ensure that the quality is always the best it can possibly be.

4. How long did your initial roll-out for the above product line take (months or years?) and how much did it cost? (\$5,000? \$20,000? More?) What kind of funding was available to you?

In my first year, I introduced our six flavors of ice cream sandwiches, and two years later, after we established our retail store and were serving scooped ice cream, we began offering our pints to wholesale customers. I’ll just say that **it cost a lot more, and has taken a lot more time, than I thought it would**, but my focus has always been about creating the best ice cream possible, maintaining the quality and building the infrastructure to support that.

Our funding has come from private investors, a non-profit/government backed loan and my own and my partner's funds.



5. Please share your insights and advice for new to industry companies.

It's a tough business if you want to sell in grocery stores. **Have a good story about why you created your product** and what need or niche it fills. Think of ways to differentiate yourself from your competition. I believe strongly in organic. It's not just a trend; it's a movement away from chemicals and over-processed foods. Organic is better for our environment and us, and is the future of our industry. Non-GMO is good, but not as good as certified organic, and as more consumers understand this, your product will be more

attractive and ahead of the curve if it's already organic.

6. How do you define your "vision"? Where do you want to be in 5 or 10 years?

My vision is to continue to expand the distribution of our ice cream and to carry the organic message about sustainable food production that's so important to the future of our food supply. Fortunately, we are able to serve this up in a sweet package that everyone can enjoy.

7. Did you participate in the 2015 Winter Fancy Food Show in January of this year? If yes, what was your total investment (booth, travel, drayage, promotion, etc?)

I walked the show (and Summer Fancy Food in NY in June 2015) but did not exhibit. We will be at both shows next year. I spent a lot of time studying the displays and taking photographs to see what worked and what didn't. It's an expensive proposition to exhibit, and you don't want to get lost among the hundreds of booths.

My takeaway was that those who used lighting effectively (and that doesn't necessarily have to mean a lot of expense) were the most attractive and caught my eye. You don't want to get lost in a dark hole. Be creative with your setup, and put more thought than money into it. Also, the staffing is critical. No one can sell your product as you do. You can't be there all the time without a break, so make sure whomever is covering for you can convey the same level of passion and enthusiasm for your product to prospective buyers.

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