

SIMPLE & DELICIOUS GRANOLA

SMALL BATCH

ORGANICS

Always Organic Always Gluten Free Always Non-GMO



Manchester, VT



Producer OF THE Month

FEBRUARY 2020



BRATTLEBORO FOOD CO-OP

Producer OF THE Month

by Jon Megas-Russell



When visiting local producers around Vermont and beyond I often come across two attributes of the people who run these businesses. First, an unbelievable thirst for entrepreneurship and risk-taking that is exciting and inevitably drives the business to success. Second, an incredible product with unique qualities that customers love. Small Batch Organics in Manchester, VT is no exception and offers excellent chocolate granola bark and granola. We are pleased to share the story of this quickly growing business in our February edition of *Food for Thought*.

The story of Small Batch Organics started when Lindsay, a Culinary Institute of America trained chef, decided to leave her job in Boston to move to Vermont to be closer to family. She fixed up an old sugar shack in Peru, Vermont, planted a half-acre garden and opened a farm

stand to sell fresh veggies and baked goods, including, of course, granola. At the same time, her future business partner, Jack, also moved north to Vermont from New York with hopes of opening a bakery. After a summer of being a customer at the farm stand, he decided that it would be great for the two to partner up and open a bakery and café. With growing success at the café, they decided to move into a bigger business which was to purchase a local general store. Through all of the changes, the granola sold very well. Lindsay's experience as a chef was very helpful in creating the granola flavors and baking consistently delicious batches.

Popularity grew for the granola and they decided to go full steam into building a granola and chocolate granola bark business. Over the past four years, Small Batch Organics has sold millions of bags of granola.

They received their first significant orders after a trip to Expo East in Baltimore back in 2015 after only being in business for 6 months. Jack and Lindsay spent all of December 2015 baking and packaging with just friends and family as their team to fulfill the 7,800 bags that were ordered. Since that time, it has been an organic process of learning manufacturing from the ground up and putting together an efficient process of baking, production and packaging. Now they distribute from local independent stores and co-ops to large national chains that emphasize in the natural channel. They can be found across the United States and in certain countries overseas. In fact, they were named Vermont Exporter of the Year by the Small Business Administration for 2019 because of their exports to Canada, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Locally they drive their own truck to pick up ingredients and



deliver products to stores, including your Brattleboro Food Co-op. Their tremendous growth has also allowed them to invest in efficient state-of-the-art machinery and hire 18 full- and part-time employees. With great attention to detail and efficient work habits, the team is able to produce thousands of pounds of granola and bark daily, still using very hands-on, custom, small batch techniques. Lindsay and Jack offer great working conditions and fair wages to their team. Many on the Small Batch team have been with the business for 3 or more years and have proudly helped the business grow.

Small Batch Organics has a very thoughtful ingredient sourcing policy; their ingredient partners are an integral part of their success. Although not all of their ingredients are produced in Vermont, they try when possible to support our local Vermont food producers.

They work with Mount Mansfield Maple, Butternut Mountain Farm and Hidden Springs Maple for all of their maple syrup and maple sugar garnishes. Mocha Joe's coffee beans are used to produce the garnish for the coffee bean granola bark. New England grown organic cranberries are used, as well as Callebaut chocolate that is processed in northern Vermont. The Small Batch Organics line is entirely organic, gluten free and non-GMO; quality clean ingredients are an important focus of the brand. They started using gluten free oats because the recipe could easily convert to gluten free, and it made the granola and bark accessible to a larger audience, one that specifically had food sensitivities. Also, utilizing organic and non-GMO ingredients supports the ideals of Small Batch and the typical granola consumer: both take pride in eating organic and non-GMO in order to contribute

to a healthier planet and people. During Lindsay's time as a chef, using quality ingredients was always of the utmost importance and she wanted to continue that approach with her granola. Although making a commitment to sourcing organic ingredients was a greater financial commitment, it allowed them to set their product apart in the granola industry. After undertaking the USDA Organic certification process they have a deep respect for the organic standards and the transparency it takes for a business to comply. Furthermore, they third-party test their products for gluten free standards, appropriate shelf stability and to ensure that their products are safely free of microbial contaminants and mycotoxins. Since the industry is flooded with granolas, they believe having a solid foundation based on quality ingredients as well as great flavor will elevate their products.

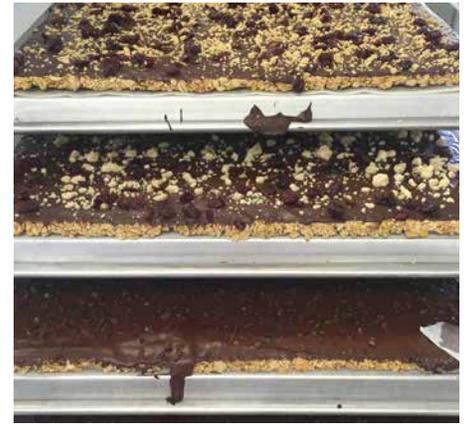


They are confident you will taste the difference in every bite, too.

So, where did they get the inspiration for chocolate granola bark? It all started with a love of trail mix and its nutty, chocolate, crunchy allure. Yet, trail mix when eaten in handfuls can be messy and a challenge to eat. Thus, they experimented with a lot of different ways to combine chocolate and granola in a way that was easier to consume when you're skiing or hiking or snacking in the car. They found the best solution was to bake sheets of granola and then top with the chocolate so that it was like a healthier version of a candy bar. While close to a granola bar, it was unique in the sense that the granola was of a higher quality, crunchier, and the chocolate made it really snackable. Using whole grains and real ingredients for their garnishes increased the appeal of the chocolate granola bark. Upon release locally and nationally they received rave reviews. Yes, they offer an indulgent product, but they intentionally limit the sugar and sodium content to balance both health and indulgence. The biggest seller overall is Coconut Toffee, with Cherry and Strawberry bark being the biggest at co-ops, although the

most outspoken fans are those who love their coffee bean granola bark, often sending the most feedback over email.

The biggest goal of Small Batch Organics is to continue to grow their business and spread the word about their brand. They feel as though they have yet to greatly invest in marketing which leaves lots of opportunity to share their story and products more widely. Through an increase in sales, they will be able to invest in new flavors, more local ingredients, more direct farm purchasing when possible and to expand into more local and independent stores around



the country. This will allow for more locally hired staff, higher wages, and the ability to increase efficiency and buying power. They also want to get to a place where Lindsay and Jack can take a vacation—seriously, they joked about this being true. As with most small business owners, a comfortable work/life balance is tough to maintain, but having the opportunity to share delicious, good-for-you granola and granola bark makes the sacrifice worth it for the team at Small Batch.

**Stop in on Thursday,
February 13th,
from 4-6pm, to taste
SMALL BATCH
ORGANICS
CHOCOLATE
GRANOLA BARK.**

