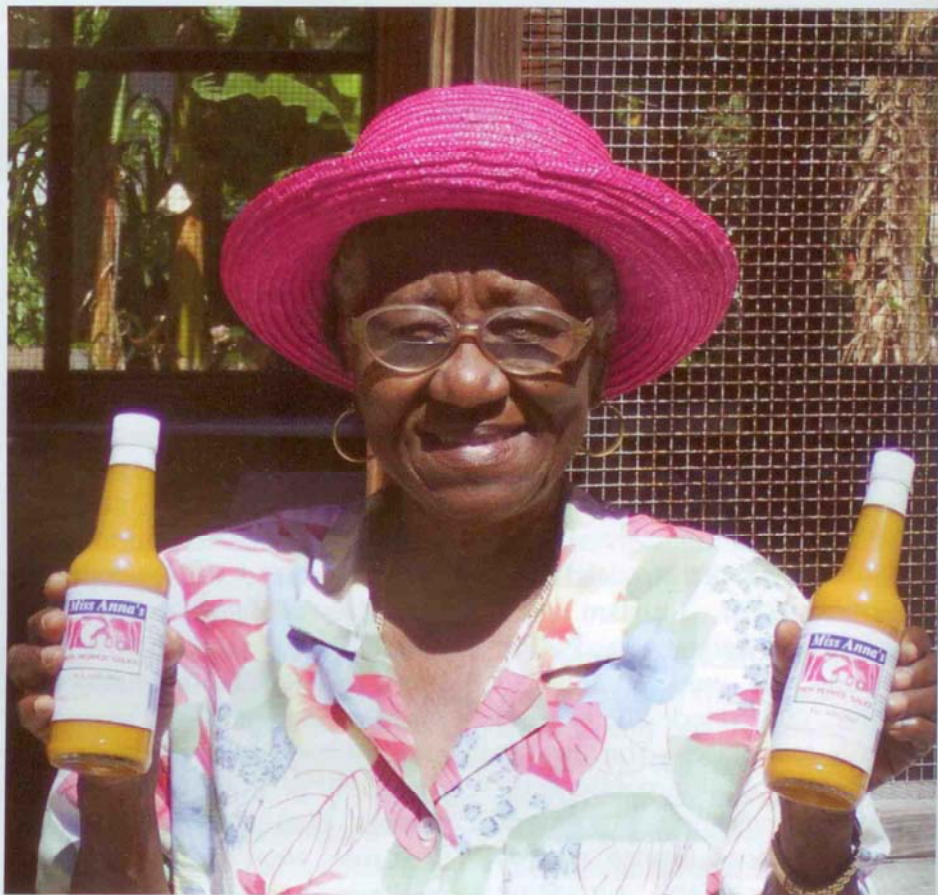


Entrepreneur's Corner

MISS ANNA'S HOTSAUCE: New Owners Cook Up Line That Features Traditional & Trendy

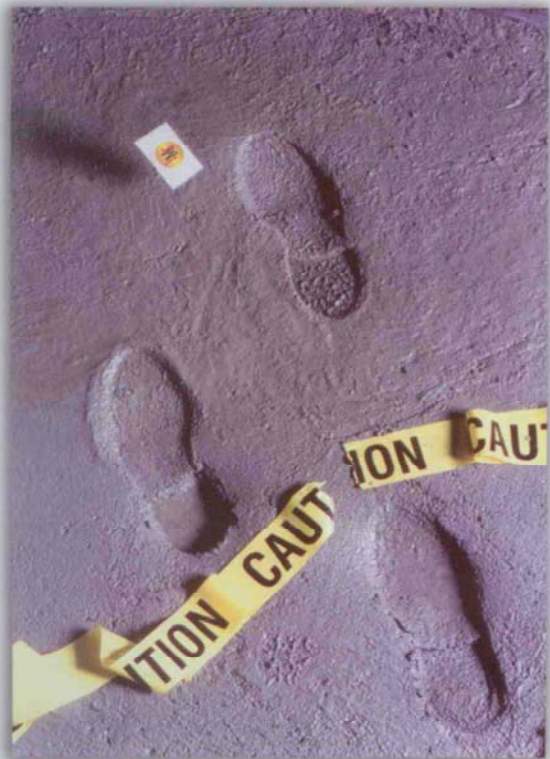
By Carol M. Bareuther, RD

It's not often that a company can please all its customers. Especially folks who don't like change, in this case when it comes to the hot sauce they've enjoyed for decades. Not to mention those who are always looking for 'something' new, like no other condiment they've tasted. Welcome Crucian Sauces, LLC, a partnership of four energetic entrepreneurs who now produce Miss Anna's



Miss Anna with her famous Crucian hot pepper sauce.

Photos courtesy of gotostcroix.com



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A stroll along this marvelous horseshoe, camera at the ready, can catch (and preserve) the flavor of the Virgin islands.

famed Crucian hot sauce, and an expanding line of other sauces, seasonings and shakes.

John Culp, managing partner, explains the origin of his company's best-selling product: "Miss Anna's Hot Pepper Sauce, the original flavor, dates back 100 years. Miss Anna's grandfather, Joseph Pierre, a fisherman on St. Lucia, informally tested several recipes on his family, friends and fellow fishermen before settling on one with curry as a key ingredient. The year was 1907 and Pierre planned only to use the sauce on his own daily meal of fish. Then his neighbors developed a liking for the sauce and they too made it a staple of their diets."

Culp continues, "The recipe was then passed down several generations. Thirty-six years ago, Anna, whose full name is Rosalie Anna Denis, and the recipe, moved to St. Croix. Over those 36 years Anna began to sell the Hot Pepper Sauce on island, adding the other two U.S. Virgin Islands to her distribution. In the 1970's, she introduced Miss Anna's Seasoning to the market, utilizing greens from her own gardens as the foundation for a flavorful addition to her Hot Pepper Sauce."

During those years, Anna's manufacturing methods were simple, yet effective, producing a consistent, quality product that enjoyed an ever-growing following.

"When Miss Anna came to St. Croix," says Culp, "she built a pepper house behind her own house and the first form of a production facility was born."

That pepper house measured 20-foot by 20-feet, with concrete walls waist high and then screens up to the ceiling. The screening allowed for the airflow necessary when working with hot peppers and dissipated the heat as the

sauce simmered. A rectangular worktable, barrels full of mashed hot peppers, a 1-gallon blender, 20 gallon pots, and an open fire pit outside completed Anna's work space.

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— John Culp

At one time, says Culp, "Anna 'hand mashed' the habanero and scotch bonnet peppers into a pep-

per mash before blending and cooking them for the sauce. You can imagine how time consuming that was, but the sauce tasted fantastic (as it still does)."

He adds, "Only recently has production moved out of the pepper house to an interim facility on island. By June, we're either looking at leasing a production facility on St. Croix or going with one of several other long-term solutions on island that we have discussed."

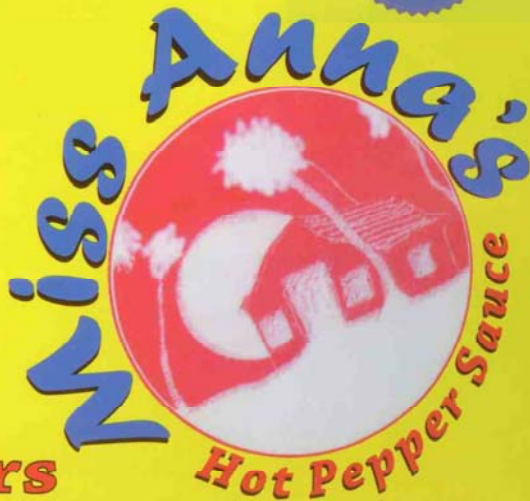
A larger production facility is essential as the partners have expanded beyond Miss Anna's Hot Pepper Sauce and Seasoning mix since they purchased the company a little less than a year ago.

"Miss Anna was very particular about who she sold her company

Continued on page 28.

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Continued from page 27.

to," Culp says. "After all, she is fond of saying, 'it's not about my picture on the label; it's about the sauce'. She was insistent that we wouldn't change her original hot sauce in any way, and we haven't and never will. In fact, all products remain all natural and continue to be made right here on St. Croix, cooked over an open flame. It really is fascinating that the sauce we enjoy today is the same recipe that her grandfather was pouring on his fish in 1907."

When Crucian Sauces trotted out Anna's original hot sauce on the global stage, at the Chile Pepper Magazine's ZestFest 2006, held in Fort Worth, Texas, in September 2006, the sauce won second place in the Caribbean-style hot sauce division.

As the new owners began expanding beyond Anna's original

hot sauce, "We offered Anna the opportunity to work with us in a consulting capacity, and she's been very gracious and helpful during the transition and during production," Culp says.

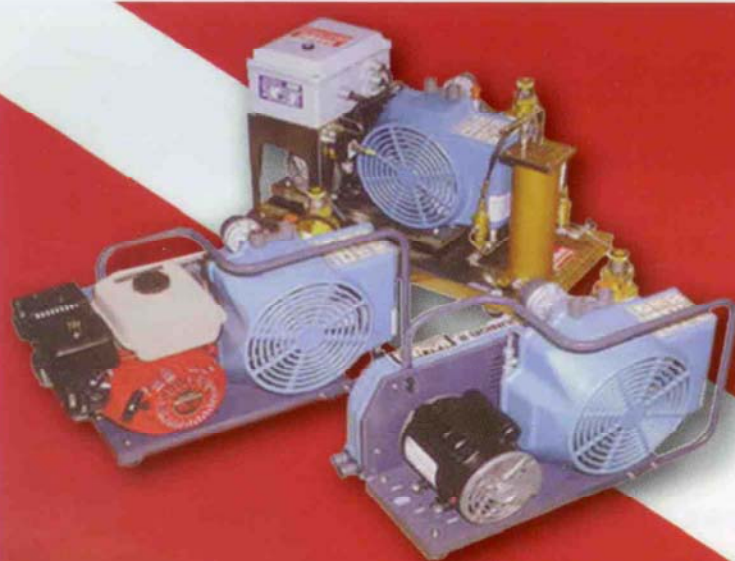
Today, Crucian Sauces also manufactures and distributes Miss Anna's Garlic Habanero Sauce, Miss Anna's Caribbean Shake (a dry rub version of the original sauce), and Miss Anna's Rainforest Seasoning. The company intends to begin distribution of a fruit based habanero sauce in May, followed by other delicious flavors by year's end. By March 2008, the company expects to expand to an 8-product line.

Products with the Crucian Sauces label are sold on all three U.S. Virgin Islands, at gift shops, restaurants and in large supermarkets such as Plaza Extra, Pueblo and Cost-U-Less. It's also available at the SeaPlanes Café,

the foodservice stand at the Seaborne Airlines seaplane base on St. Croix, and a secondary business run by Crucian Sauces. Customers can also purchase the products on their web site (www.missannashotsauce.com). So far Web-based customers have ordered from as far away as Colorado, London, and military bases in Germany.

In coming months, Culp says, "We intend to extend our distribution so the same flavor and tradition Crucians and Virgin Islanders have enjoyed for years may be enjoyed by others down island, in Puerto Rico, and stateside."

Despite the new label design on Miss Anna's most recent products, the original Hot Pepper Sauce is still bottled with the signature red, white and blue label. Both the original and new labels feature an artistic depiction of Anna's grandfather's



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Labels on all products feature Miss Anna's family home in St. Lucia.

home on St. Lucia, originally painted by her son. "Preserving

the heritage of these great sauces, and of this great family, will

always remain important," Culp explains. ✕



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