

# Bavoy banks on soy craze and baking to build itself

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Cory Ballard thinks the baking industry has gone stale. But on June 2, the president of Bavoy Inc. hopes to freshen it up.

That's the day the 2-year-old company will slice up the first distribution of its new HealthyHearth bread to the two Central Ohio Andersons General Stores, on Brice and on Sawmill roads.

With growing consumer demand for soy-based foods, but not a lot of soy breads on the market, Ballard hopes the bread line is the ideal first of what could be dozens of baked-goods made by his company from soy. Produced at an area bakery, HealthyHearth is the only one of its kind certified by the Food and Drug Administration to tout a heart healthy label because it contains 6.25 grams of soy protein per slice and is low in fat, sodium and cholesterol.

The bread initially will be sold in three varieties — original soy, soy cinnamon raisin and soy multigrain. Each loaf will sell for \$4.69 to \$4.99.

The company is pursuing a patent for its baking process.

Perhaps ironic, Ballard didn't create HealthyHearth because of the surging demand for low-carbohydrate foods. His soy bread has 13 grams of carbs per slice, lower than other non-soy breads, but it's meant for consumers interested in what Ballard calls a "lifestyle change and not fad diets or the low-carb fad."

The FDA in 1999 gave food manufacturers permission to put labels on products that are high in soy protein, indicating the foods may help lower heart disease risk.

That's driven an explosion of soy prod-



JANE ADAMS ■ BUSINESS FIRST  
Cory Ballard is pursuing a patent for his HealthyHearth bread, which will soon be on sale in Columbus.

ucts, said Tracy Spencer, a spokeswoman for Boulder, Colo.-based Wild Oats Market, a chain of specialty grocers.

"There's increased awareness about the health benefits," Spencer said.

Wild Oats stocks its shelves with a variety of soy products, including soy peanut butter, soy milk and soy burgers.

HealthyHearth's baking technology was hatched by Ballard and Yael Vodovotz in Ohio State University's laboratories. Vodovotz is an assistant professor at OSU's Department of Food Science and Technolo-

gy and Ballard is a former student.

Bavoy tinkered with the product for years before getting the company to the point where it was ready, in March, to set up corporate offices in the Business Technology Center. The company also recently closed a deal for \$35,000 from the First Fifty Fund.

The fund is co-managed by the BTC Incubator, the Science and Technology Campus Corp. and the life sciences organization Omerts.

Ballard said the company now is trying to raise about \$400,000 to expand product dis-

tribution to other grocery stores and restaurants throughout Ohio.

Also in the business plan is creating revenue by licensing the technology to bakeries. According to the United Soybean Council, 74 percent of consumers know soy is good for them and 24 percent report eating soy-based products weekly.

The \$4 billion-a-year soy foods industry has enjoyed double-digit growth in the United States since 1995.

Bharat Chhabria, who is commercialization sector manager at the Science and Technology Campus Corp., said the HealthyHearth brand is positioned well because of the rise in numbers of health-conscious consumers.

And while Bavoy's primary product is bread, Chhabria said, the baking technology should easily allow the company to eventually spread to other areas of the food industry.

"Will the consumer like seeing subs, bagels, burgers or maybe even pizzas made from soy bread high in protein and low in carbs? Let's wait and watch," he said.

Donatos Pizzeria this year launched a NoDough pizza as a low-carb option and used soy protein crumbles as the base. The Blacklick company, while not disclosing sales levels, has said the pizza became popular.

Another promising indicator for HealthyHearth is that demand for premium-price breads is increasing.

Total fresh bread dollar sales through grocery stores have been flat for the past two years, but Bavoy's market analysis indicates sales of premium-price breads have grown 17 percent during that span and represent \$1 billion of the \$5.8 billion segment.