

When it come to good taste, this pair is unbeatable. Bet on it.

## Passion of a Pair

Kevin and Susan Miller have entertained guests in their home at dinner and holiday parties for years. The husband-and-wife couple offered homemade delicacies prepared by Kevin such as tomato chutney and apple peach chutney to the delight of their guests. The favorable responses reinforced the Miller's interest in creating a business related to food and entertainment. The Palatable Pair is the culmination of Kevin's cooking talents, Susan's sales and marketing acumen, and their combined business experience.

“Kevin has always had a passion for cooking,” said Susan.

Getting started as a professional producer of gourmet goods took some preparation. Kevin had no prior training or experience in a professional kitchen. When the idea for a line of chutneys and gourmet foods arose, he relied on a long-time friend from high school to provide a key connection. Barb Rafael referred Kevin to her husband Mano who operates Le Fou Frog as the chef-owner. Kevin spent several nights a week working unpaid in the kitchen over a year's time to learn techniques and fine tune his recipes. He downplays his culinary skills in a restaurant setting, but he proved to be a reliable cook in the kitchen.

“Probably my biggest contribution to the restaurant was at the bar,” he joked.

Kidding aside, Kevin has also catered private events with rave reviews from clients. Gradually, the crucial results of Kevin's apprenticeship evolved in his own kitchen.

## Born from Tradition

Chutney is a common condiment in Indian food. Traditionally, chutney is a sweet-and-spicy condiment that originates from eastern India. Chutney is typical-



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ly made to be eaten fresh, using traditional local ingredients based on availability and seasonal freshness. Spice blends used in each type of chutney vary based on family recipe, geographic location, and available ingredients. Cumin, fenugreek, cardamom, garlic, and ginger comprise some of the key flavors depending on the particular recipe.

When chutney is made fresh it would not normally contain preserving agents, since it is usually consumed soon after preparation. However, most chutney made and sold in the United States and Europe is prepared with vegetable oil, vinegar, or lemon juice to enhance preservation.

“Our version is Westernized certainly because I use Western sugars, but we have had a good response from Indians that have tasted our chutney. That's a good sign to have someone from the culture approve,” said Kevin.

Not all chutneys look or taste the same especially when found on a store shelf. Typically, chutney is manufactured to appease a Western palate with an

overly sweet taste profile. The texture isn't quite right and veers toward the consistency of baby food puree. Just as an authentic homemade recipe for marinara sauce, apple pie, or salsa has distinct qualities, Kevin's line of three chutneys raises the bar in taste and appearance. He developed his recipes over the years while cooking Indian food at home.

"I've been making the tomato chutney and apple peach chutney for a long time. We serve them when we host events. The pear chutney was created based on opening the business. People asked if we had a pear chutney since we called ourselves The Palatable Pair," said Kevin.

To create consistent quality, Kevin cooks each batch of chutney in small quantities. He uses traditional Indian spices and blends them together to yield spectacular results. Careful tasting will detect hints of cumin, garlic, and ginger depending on the chutney. Kevin uses different spice blends, up to fifteen in all, that vary for each type of chutney.

"The pear chutney has cardamom in it which produces a more sophisticated flavor," said Kevin.

The cardamom does carry through as a passport to another culture. The Piquant Pear Chutney tastes and smells exotic. It's hard to remember that this delicious condiment is produced in a local kitchen. Each bite evokes a sensory experience that transports the taster to distant lands. It's a 10.5-ounce ticket to adventure that can be enjoyed at home and served at parties. Yes, it's that good. For an equally delicious and more familiar combination, try the Apple Peach Infusion Chutney. These fruits pair well together for a homespun flavor that takes a detour through India.

The Tomato Explosion Chutney captures the taste of fresh-picked tomatoes paired with ripe, fruity apricot. A sweet fragrance unfolds when a jar is opened. The taste of sugar, slightly tart vinegar, and fruit arrives first, followed by the subtle heat of spices and chili peppers. The point of chutney is not to overwhelm the palate with fiery heat, but to seduce the taster with an inviting array of flavors. The Palatable Pair succeeds.

The chunky texture adds to the sensory appeal, ensuring that the flavor is held in each bite. Kevin wanted to avoid the too-sweet taste and processed texture of other chutney brands on store shelves. Using fresh produce from local sources is also crucial to the end result.

"If you use tomatoes too ripe, you end up with tomato sauce instead of chutney," Kevin explained.

Kevin hints that he has several other chutney recipes to add to the product line when ready. Susan and Kevin test market the chutneys at parties, gauge reactions, and then develop an appealing recipe. The company also sells toasted and spiced almonds.



"The almonds came about through our parties. Kevin made them at the last minute and they were popular," said Susan. "All of our suppliers are local except for the almonds. They come from a California farm."

Once again, the attention to taste and appearance prove worth the effort. The whole almonds are grand in size, providing an addictive one-two punch of sweetness and spice in a single crunchy bite. A handful goes quickly, believe it.

## Indulge and Entertain

“All of our products are geared toward entertaining. We create products that you can put on the table for a dinner party of four to five guests or for a Christmas party to feed lots of people. You don't have to spend time cooking food yourself. You can present these, let people indulge, and enjoy yourself,” said Susan.

The business has received enthusiastic feedback from individuals and chefs about using the chutneys. For instance, Le Fou Frog has used the apple peach chutney and pear chutney in *amuse bouche* as a means of offering a petite bite at the start of a meal. *Amuse bouche* means “to delight the mouth.” Offering *amuse* is a customary introduction from the chef to the diner that awakens the palate and hints at sensory delights to come.

“We've heard from a chef in Boulder that uses the pear chutney on duck. Other customers use the chutney in reduction sauces,” said Kevin.

“Or applying the tomato chutney on homemade pizza. We also had many people using the apple peach chutney last Thanksgiving,” added Susan.

Susan suggests serving any of the chutneys over cream cheese, Brie, or a favorite gourmet cheese along with an assortment of crackers. More adventurous cooks can add chutney as an accent to duck, tuna, steak or salmon tartare appetizers. The Tomato Explosion Chutney makes a great spread for bruschetta or sauce for homemade pizza. Try a dollop of Apple Peach Infusion Chutney with aged Swiss & prosciutto wrapped on a cracker. The Piquant Pear Chutney works well with goat cheese on a salad or as an appetizer. Or simply use as a condiment to liven up any meat, rice, or side dish.

## Launching the Line

The time spent in the Le Fou Frog kitchen and the Miller's home kitchen resulted in a wildly popular product line. However, the other half of the thriving

business takes place outside of the kitchen. Susan handles the back-end sales and marketing and puts a face to the line as well by appearing at product tasting events. She greets potential customers at events held at Hall's and other local venues, explains the product, and sells the gourmet goods on the spot.

“We sold 45 jars of chutney at our first event. We listened to what people said. I sold 70 jars in about three hours at Halls. People like it. The response has been overwhelming,” said Susan.

The local response has exceeded the Miller's expectations. They intend to slowly expand distribution in Colorado, Chicago, Napa Valley, and Missouri. Yet growth brings a fresh set of challenges. Maintaining product quality, relationships with retail shops, and the capacity to fulfill orders remains important.

“We have actually turned down business. I've had two businesses for a long time and understand the danger of growing too fast. It's not hard at this point to move into other sites, but we want to ensure quality,” said Kevin.

“It's the sales and marketing on the back end that takes time,” said Susan. “People want to be courted. We will develop the products as needed. Every state is different.”

The careful attention to quality, both in the culinary and the business end, have proven that following your passion can be a delicious adventure.

Visit [www.ThePalatablePair.com](http://www.ThePalatablePair.com) to learn more about their products or call (800) 436-9047 for details.

Ask for The Palatable Pair gourmet line at these local stores in Missouri – Hall's (Plaza/Crown Center), Waldeaux Wine & Spirits (Waldo), J'Adore (Brookside), Wines by Jennifer (Parkville), The Wine Cellar (River Market), Pear Tree Design and Antiques (Crestwood), Happy Hour (Independence), and Cockerell Mercantile Company (Lee's Summit).

Also available at select locations in Colorado and Wisconsin.