

# Condiments are cooking

Sable & Rosenfeld parlayed a homemade condiment into an international success.

By Sally Praskey



Myra Sable

**When Myra Sable** – pregnant with her third child – teamed up with neighbour Carol Rosenfeld in 1970 to import gourmet food products from Europe, little did they imagine they were laying the cornerstone for a popular and ever-expanding line of condiments and cocktail garnishes.

The imported products were originally sold in the upscale and now-defunct Creeds store in Toronto, as well as at Holt Renfrew outlets across Canada. When the fledgling company's second Christmas shipment missed the boat – literally – Sable and Rosenfeld headed into their kitchens to create foods that would fill the shelves of their own freestanding boutiques.

Their first product was Sweet Honey Mustard – at least until Canadian business magnate Garfield Weston, then owner of the iconic Fortnum & Mason specialty store in London, noted that he didn't have a Russian mustard. "The strange thing was it actually was an authentic Russian recipe, as it came from a Russian uncle of Carol's," explains Sable. When *Esquire* magazine featured the Russian mustard in its 1971 Christmas gift centrefold, Neiman Marcus came calling, and

the Sable & Rosenfeld brand took off.

The two partners began producing pears in Cointreau, antipasto, apple butter, strawberry jam in port, and zucchini

pickles in their home kitchens, later renting commercial kitchens and "hiring everyone we knew to cook, chop, and can," recalls Sable. They exhibited at the Fancy Food Shows, winning some major awards in 1985 that brought instant success for the brand and the company.

But it wasn't smooth sailing from there. "We then went through many growing pains," says Sable. "Hiring co-packers, some of whom stole our recipes, some of whom went bankrupt in the middle of a production season; and figuring out how to best reach the Canadian and U.S. markets, as shipping direct was no longer working well." The solution was to close all their retail outlets, and hire brokers and distributors across both countries.

Although Rosenfeld is no longer part of the company, Sable & Rosenfeld continues to grow.

It now boasts more than 50 products, including mustards, sauces, bruschettas, "Topsy" cocktail garnishes and, most recently, Topsy Tapas—vegetables stuffed with imported Austrian cream cheese and hand-packed in an herb-splashed vegetable oil. Two more "exciting new products" are on tap for the upcoming Fancy Food Show. "Organic, gluten-free, all-natural products are no longer a trend, but a way of life," notes Sable. "All products must follow these criteria."

Inspiration for her creations comes "at the weirdest times and places," says Sable. "I love to travel, follow the new chefs and visit their restaurants. I suspect that this, combined with my love of cooking [she is currently re-issuing her cookbook, *Elegant Entertaining*] "is where the development of new products comes from." She is never short of original ideas. "We have been copied numerous times, but I can honestly say I have never copied a product line. I always have new products that I'm eager to launch. As long as I'm true to our mission statement of creating easy-to-use, everyday condiments, I know what to do." ■