

Penny's It's The Sauce

For Mr. Penny, it's "mother knows best"; he credits his mother with choosing the exact recipe for his now-famous apple juice infused grillin' sauce. After experimentation with different sauce ingredients for backyard barbeques and several taste tests by his trusted source, he created a style of sauce unique to and embraced by his beloved Youngstown. And it can be described in one word: delicious!

In 2019, Mr. Penny celebrates ten years of making Penny's It's The Sauce. What began as a home-based operation led to seeking a co-packer in Illinois for large-scale production. However, Mr. Penny acknowledges the need for guidance in starting a small business. He spent several of his own dollars in seeking production resources simply because he lacked the appropriate paperwork related to nutritional analysis, insurance, and US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) registration.

With help from the Athens Food Ventures Center (ACEnet) in Athens, Ohio, as well as the Common Wealth Kitchen Incubator (CWKI) in Youngstown, Mr. Penny connected with the necessary people and places to begin bottling and marketing his product. Success followed from there; since 2017, he has sold 2,800 bottles of sauce and distributes to 16 stores across northeast Ohio and western Pennsylvania! In addition, his sauce is featured in items found at City Subs in Hubbard, A Fresh Wind Catering by Trina Williams, Cultivate Café, and the Elm Street Diner in Youngstown.

A gregarious personality and confidence in his product also factor into Mr. Penny's success. Through personal conversations with store managers, ten stores agreed to carry his sauce. He conducts all of his own sauce tastings held at stores because he values the positive feedback from people about the taste and quality of his product. In the world of business, he has learned to look forward, not back, and to welcome the feelings of excitement and fear that come with the journey.

As part of his look to the future, Mr. Penny has teamed with Santisi's Wholesale Foods in Youngstown to act as his distributor to further stores in the community, such as Rulli Brothers and more Sparkle Market locations. He has also explored scaling up his production to meet the increased demand. He praises the resources from the CWKI for making these opportunities possible.

Above all, Mr. Penny operates his business with the goal of giving back to the community. He strives toward a point at which he can donate a percentage of his sales profits to grassroots organizations in Youngstown--especially ones that focus on serving youth populations. His previous work in organizations and the Youngstown City Schools motivates him to support positive initiatives for young people.

Can't wait to try Penny's It's The Sauce? Find more information about tastings and sales locations at www.pennyssauce.com and on Facebook at Pennyssauce. And be sure to ask Mr. Penny for the story behind the chickens on his label!