



Was I nuts?

I know nothing about the food business. But, I'm learning. My adventure in the culinary arts started as I was phasing in my retirement from Voice of America, where I had worked as a science reporter for more than 30 years. At a retirement seminar, I was advised to have a post-retirement plan. I had lots of plans, but a snack food company wasn't one of them. So how was it that a week after I left my job in June 2016, I was at the opening of Whole Foods in Pentagon City with my Seedy Nutty product on the bottom shelf?

Becoming the Seedy Nutty lady

Just after Labor Day 2015, I wrote an article for the *Washington Post* on the Crossroads Community Farmers Market. Crossroads is a trendsetter among markets in our region. It accepts government nutritional benefits, even doubles them, to make farmers market fruits and veggies accessible to those who can't otherwise afford them.

Was this a fork in my road? Apparently, yes. I looked around and figured this was a place to test out the yummy seed and nut bark-like treat that I had first tasted in Israel. With blessings from my 80-year-old cousin, who gave me the recipe, I set up a stand as a cottage industry at the Crossroads market. I gave out free samples and could sing the gluten-free, salt-free, dairy-free virtues of Seedy Nutty healthy-for-you-anytime-snack in several languages, which helped engage the mostly non-English-speaking shoppers. And, then there is the fact that Seedy Nutty's ingredients — peanuts, pecans, and pumpkin, sesame, and sunflower seeds — are

good for you. I told them that, too. I sold out every week.

Biz-Edu 101

The market is under the umbrella of the Crossroads Community Food Network, a non-profit based in Takoma Park, Md. that offers educational programs in schools, operates a community kitchen, and runs a micro-enterprise training program for low-income food entrepreneurs. I offered to help with Spanish translation for the 10-week entrepreneurial business course in exchange for taking the course, team-taught by a former chocolatier from Wisconsin and an AmeriCorps Vista volunteer.

I got insurance, a farmers market license, and took the ServSafe Test. My success at the Crossroads market led to a full in-box of invitations to sell Seedy Nutty at events like the Takoma/Langlely Small Business Saturday, the Montgomery County Food and Beverage Fair, the Washington Adventist Family Fun Festival, the Takoma Park Presbyterian Church Alternative Gift Fair, and the University of Maryland student-run Yumpreneurship Showcase. It turned out that people really loved Seedy Nutty as a crunchy crumble over yogurt or as an afternoon pick-me-up snack.

SOPs and more

In March 2016, I got the call from Whole Foods. Opening day at Pentagon City's new store would be June 29. Yikes, just a few weeks away! This required a whole new level of paperwork, double insurance, and finding a commercial kitchen. I was still working my day job and, with the deadline looming,

had barely enough time to register with the FDA and write up the SOPs, along with the HACCP, recall, and

allergen plans required for a food

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