

# The Perfect Purée of Napa Valley LLC

## Cooking Up the Essentials of a Successful Business

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Tracy Hayward left her job in political fundraising in 1987, sold her house for start-up capital and moved back in with her parents at the age of 30 to pursue her entrepreneurial exploits. It could have been a recipe for disaster, but instead it turned out to be the formula for sweet success. Combining a love for cooking with a keen eye for networking, Hayward studied distributors, suppliers, processing and packaging and then launched The Perfect Purée of Napa Valley LLC, her California-based company offering a line of award-winning gourmet fruit and vegetable purees, concentrates and zests that feature global influences like Asian, Latin and the Caribbean.

“I studied at La Varenne Ecole de Cuisine in Paris, France, and I realized that purees are an integral part of a gourmet chef’s toolkit, but they are very labor intensive to produce by hand,”

explains Hayward. “And here we are 24 years later, all because I had this vision to make a high-quality fruit puree. From the start we were a completely self-financed start-up company. My first break was a Los Angeles produce distributor who let me ride with their sales representatives in Palm Springs, Calif. The rest is history.

“I was a little naïve in the beginning, which was probably a good thing, because I had no idea how hard it would be to create the perfect product that needed to be widely distributed to create adequate sales volume,” continues Hayward. “I have spent the past two decades learning about supply chain and distribution for the food service industry and how to manage growth.”

Hayward’s lessons served The Perfect Purée well. Since its founding in 1988, the company has grown from eight to over 30 puree flavors in its Culinary Traditions line, which has been adopted by culinary and beverage professionals nationwide. In 2009, the company launched its Beverage Artistry line and now has a cult following amongst mixologists and bar chefs.

“As a company, our mission is to indulge in chefs and culinary professionals and to provide hotels and caterers with access to the highest quality fruit purees year-round,” says Hayward. “With the mixology trend on the rise, it only made sense for us to develop a line of products specifically for bartenders and the drink market. Many of our purees were already popular within that market segment, but we designed a line specifically for bar use with flavors that



*The Perfect Purée of Napa Valley LLC staff*

are a must have for today's consumers: Yuzu, Blood Orange, Passion Fruit, Sangria and Mojito."

Company headquarters are located in the celebrated wine-producing region of Napa Valley. With a staff of 20, this company drives its business through all parts of the United States through a myriad of specialty, produce and broadline distributors, selling into Canada, Mexico and island nations beyond. Additionally, The Perfect Purée holds warehouses in Southern California and on the East Coast. With its solid distribution and supply systems in place, The Perfect Purée continues to grow its market share in the gourmet foods sector.



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### Hurdles to Success

"I had to teach myself everything about this industry and I admit I was afraid of failure," reflects Hayward, "And then I was a little afraid of the challenges brought on by success." The Perfect Purée's growth has not been achieved without a few speed bumps.

"One of the quiet but telling challenges for our growth as a company has been sourcing produce around the world and purchasing raw materials with very tight specifications on contracts, up to a year in advance," explains Hayward. "With shipping delays, the implementation of Homeland Security and unexpected sales increases, our management systems had to be refined over the years to keep pace. On top of that, we are a California company, through-and-through, and the labor laws here are very intense.

"Lawyers often treat California as if it were a separate country," laments Hayward. "There are layers of paperwork and regulation added to the process of employment. I really think the Congress should spend a few years running a small business and it might help them to understand what it means to make payroll."

### Looking Forward

Hayward plans to continue to develop the already impressive line of products in the coming years. "Our major objectives, at this point, are to survive and to grow," proclaims Hayward. "We have to remain relevant to our customer base, introducing flavors that will have appeal and that respond to trends. We

also have to remember our heritage and be open to being flavor forward. We are well known for our passion fruit, yuzu, ginger, mango and lychee to name a few."

Hayward recognizes that success will come from help, primarily the chefs, mixologists and bar chefs that have shaped the brand's success. "We continue to work hard to reach out to create new accounts and to provide more tools and resources to our users, like recipes on how to use flavors they may have never used before in their dishes or drinks," says Hayward. "We're in an industry that's constantly changing and we need to be able to respond in our sales, marketing and R&D activities."

As for her role as president, Hayward lends her guidance freely, but relies on the team she has assembled. Hayward reveals, "I like to remain behind the scenes and work in a collaborative relationship with my staff at The Perfect Purée."

Using its website to feature seasonal products, recipes and the culinary stars who use the product, The Perfect Purée continues to infuse personality into everything the company does. Offering high quality and consistency for almost 25 years, The Perfect Purée of Napa Valley has developed into a company ready to toast not only its quarter-century anniversary, but also a long future to come. •