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LESLIE KIRRANE: The mustard lady



JONATHAN ALLEN/FORT MILL TIMES
 Baxter resident Leslie Kirrane has launched a line of homemade mustards based on a secret family recipe. She's hoping to pique the interest of nationally known chefs like Rachael Ray.

Putting mustard on her pitch

By Jonathan Allen
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FORT MILL TOWNSHIP — Not much is made in Fort Mill anymore, but that's not stopping Baxter resident Leslie Kirrane from launching a line of homemade mustards.

Kirrane's starting with a family recipe she's been making for family and friends for more than 20 years. It's sweet and tangy with a little spicy kick at the end.

"Everyone thinks it has honey and horse-radish, but it doesn't have either," Kirrane explained.

She's keeping the recipe to herself, though she does say it includes vinegar, imported mustard powder and eggs — among other ingredients.

At the prodding of neighbors, Kirrane started selling her mustard in November at Baxter's Market Day event. That day, she had three varieties: A standard mustard, a cranberry mustard and a garlic mustard. She asked her customers to fill out a survey about the flavors they would like to see in the future. Wasabi was a popular request.

"Around the holidays I made the cranberry mustard," she said. "It's awesome for leftover turkey sandwiches."

Kirrane makes three batches at a time. It takes about an hour and requires constantly stirring the mixture. Each batch fills approximately 10 four-ounce jars, or five eight-ounce jars. She sells both sizes, \$3 for the small and \$6 for the large.

Each jar has about a three-month shelf life and must be kept refrigerated because Kirrane doesn't use preservatives. However, she is trying to decide whether to add preserva-

tives in the future. That would allow her to ship product over long distances, something that could be necessary if her Must Have Mustard brand takes off nationally.

Recently, Kirrane sent some samples to Rachael Ray, and says the TV chef may be trying it on air sometime this summer. No one with Ray's show could be reached for comment. Kirrane also set her sights on Paula Deen, Oprah Winfrey and Ellen DeGeneres, because an endorsement from any of them could go a long way at the checkout counter.

"I'm going to retire and make millions with mustard," she jokes.

"It's really good, I love it," customer Nancy Burroughs said.

Burroughs has been getting mustard from Kirrane for a while now. She had some for her family when they visited at Christmas, and has taken some to other parties and functions in the past.

"One of my sons is a mustard connoisseur and he orders all kinds of mustard through the mail," Burroughs said. "He says hers is the best he's ever had."

Kirrane still has a lot of work to do. She's in the process of designing nutrition labels for her jars, and, speaking of jars, she's looking for a unique design for her line. Then there's the problem of getting her mustards and sauces — she plans to make several varieties — into stores.

She wants to start locally, and may look into supplying it to restaurants. There's also a Web site for Must Have Mustard under construction.

In the meantime, she's taking orders by phone at 370-4888 and by e-mail at musthave-mustard@gmail.com.

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