

The Detroit News



Black Lotus co-owner Mike Allan, left, and McClure's Pickles co-owner Joe McClure will host a pickle party tonight aimed at boosting the pickles' profile locally. Visitors can sample and buy the pickles.

CLAWSON -- Southfield natives Joe and Bob McClure grew up making pickles with their parents, whipping up jars of a garlic- and pepper-heavy recipe passed down from their great-grandmother for gifts to be given to family and friends.

This August the brothers turned the family pastime into a business, brewing up batches of McClure's Pickles and selling them to restaurants and markets here and in New York, where Bob McClure lives. By January they'll be available for sale through the McClure's Web site, and the brothers' goal is to have them on the shelves of local gourmet groceries sometime next year.

"It's so much fun doing this," said Joe McClure. He buys his produce locally, mostly from Eastern Market, and his brother does the same in New York.

"Our pickles are unique for their different nuances -- the peppers we use, the combination of garlic and dill. I love talking to the farmers to see what's coming in."

The pickles' unique flavor already has garnered a write-up in the *New York Times*, and they're popping up at places like the Black Lotus Brewing Co., which will host a McClure's pickle party tonight.

"One day Joe came in and was having a couple of beers and mentioned he made pickles," said Black Lotus co-owner Mike Allan. "He brought a jar in and we tried them and they blew us away, they were just so good. Now he brings them in a case at a time. They fly."

The McClure's recipe calls for a hot brine (most pickles use cold brine, which

requires less time for fermenting), plenty of peppers and garlic and a long ferment period -- four to five months for whole pickles, two months for spears. The brothers sell the spicy result in large jars with the peppers mixed in.

"It's a flavor that you don't get from any commercial pickle you may have tried before," Allan said. "People love the garlic, people love the kick."

In addition to the Black Lotus, McClure's is sold in Metro Detroit at *bel Cibo Bistro and Market* in Clawson and *Amici's* in Berkley.

The party tonight is aimed at boosting the pickles' profile locally. Visitors to Black Lotus will have the chance to sample the pickles, enter a pickle raffle and buy jars of the condiment.

As sales take off, the company, which is currently renting a commercial kitchen, is looking for a permanent manufacturing facility to keep up with demand. The brothers are also looking to expand their product line, experimenting with a garlicky recipe that would skip the peppers to reduce the spice, and its Web site encourages fans to send in recipes that use McClure's pickles and peppers.

"We're aiming for nationwide sales," Joe McClure said. "Our pickles are for someone who enjoys nuances of great flavor. I just haven't had a pickle like them."

Alexa Stanard is a Metro Detroit freelance writer.

Picklers making a name for themselves

Local spotlight

McClure's spicy brand of pickles made with an old family recipe, locally obtained ingredients.

Alexa Stanard / Special to The Detroit News



"People love the garlic, people love the kick," says Black Lotus owner Mike Allan.

McClure's Pickles

What: Garlic and pepper-spiced pickles

Owners: Brothers Joe and Bob McClure

Phone: (248) 837-9323

Web: www.mcclurespickles.com

Launch party

Where: Black Lotus Brewing Co. 1 East 14 Mile, Clawson

When: 8 p.m.-midnight tonight