

Family spices up life with homemade hot pickles

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ROYAL OAK -- For 50 years, members of the McClure family have gathered almost every August to continue a family tradition: Making pickles.

Jenny and Mike McClure of Royal Oak and their sons, Joe and Bob, have turned that tradition into a business. Started in August, McClure's Pickles offers jars of homemade spicy garlic pickles online (www.mcclurespickles.com) and at stores in Clawson and Brooklyn.

Jenny McClure remembers making pickles as far back as age 6, when she would go to the Royal Oak Farmers Market or Eastern Market at 3 a.m. to pick up vegetables and supplies.

"We just knew that come August, we'd be sitting there making pickles," she said.

The spicy garlic pickles that Jenny McClure's family makes is based on her grandmother's recipe, and include red chilies and garlic cloves packed in with pickles.

Just as she was dragged to the market early in the morning, Jenny McClure started taking her sons when they were old enough to help.

"Since me and my brother were little kids, as far back as I can remember, we've been making pickles," said Joe, who is co-owner of the company with Bob.

Joe, who lives in Troy and is working on his doctorate at Wayne State University, takes care of Detroit-area operations. Bob handles Brooklyn, where he lives and works as an actor.

Each year, the McClures were making more and more pickles for themselves and to give to friends and family. This year, the sons realized there was enough demand for the pickles that they could sell them.

Turning pickle-making into a business was a big step. Last year, the family made 150 jars of pickles. This year, they made 1,000 jars and are storing them in their homes.



Jenny McClure, who jokes that her husband married her to get the recipe for the pickles, said she just works around the many jars.

For their first year, the McClures had to rent kitchen space to make the pickles, but they hope to find a manufacturer to help out with the process.

Locally, McClure's Pickles are available at Black Lotus Brewing Company, where the McClure's have held free sampling events, and Bel Cibo Bistro & Market in Clawson. In Brooklyn, the pickles are available in a few locations, one of which uses the chilies and brine in drinks.

Andrew Doye, owner of Bel Cibo, tried the pickles at Black Lotus. He said about 25 percent of Bel Cibo's inventory is Michigan-based businesses.

"I met Joe and just tasted a sample of the pickles and they were beyond excellent," he said.

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