

UNPASTEURIZED BEVERAGES EXPECTED TO BRING IN 2019 SALES OF \$3.5M+ Sol-ti Found Way To Stand Out From The Juice Crowd

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Sol-ti, an unpasteurized organic “living” beverage line stored in glass bottles, is available in stores like Whole Foods Market, Mother’s Market and Lazy Acres Market, as well as Walmart and Amazon, Sol-ti is projected to end the year with over \$3.5 million in revenue, according to founder and CEO Ryne O’Donnell. And, in 2020, he predicts that number will be more than double.

Five years ago, the idea to launch the multimillion-dollar company for O’Donnell came out of pure necessity.

While traveling for work as a sales representative for an enterprise technology company and while practicing an organic, plant-based, raw vegan diet, O’Donnell came to realize there weren’t many organic and fresh glass-bottle beverage options that weren’t pasteurized on the market. So, he set out to create his own.

In 2014, O’Donnell self-funded and founded Sol-ti, a company that makes glass bottle living beverages in its 20,000 square foot FDA-approved, HACCP food safety facility in Miramar. According to O’Donnell, Sol-ti has a unique UV light filtration process that uses light rays to preserve the liquid, preventing pasteurization so the nutrients aren’t impacted.

To fund Sol-ti, O’Donnell said he raised \$300,000 through jobs he held from the age of 15-25. Later, an equipment manufacturer named Goodnature that works closely with the juice industry invested \$150,000 more.

“I worked Monday through Sunday over and over for years,” he said, making fresh juices out of a rental kitchen from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. every day. O’Donnell would then make juice deliveries the next day at 6 a.m. from a portable ice chest. Once that part of the day’s task was complete, he’d knock on doors of other retailers that he thought could sell the product via a consignment method. Eventually, he began hiring people to help make the product and then to handle deliveries.

It’s first contract was with RA Yoga Studio in Costa Mesa in 2014 followed by the likes of Mother’s and then Bristol Farms and Lazy Acres, among others. In 2014, O’Donnell applied for Whole Foods and by 2017, Sol-ti landed on the market’s shelves. Today, it is one of the top-selling items in the national grocer, he said. By the end of the first two years, Sol-ti had 200 accounts covering many of the major grocery stores in Southern California, according to O’Donnell.

What makes Sol-ti successfully, aside from its product and process, is that the company, as a whole, stays very connected with its consumers and its consumers’ needs, said O’Donnell. This could mean anything from lowering the sugar count of a certain drink to lowering the price. Add to that, a great team and tenacity to push forward in the face of adversity, he said.

On the flipside, the hardest part has been the fear of running out of cash, said O’Donnell, adding that many times the company was close to bankruptcy.

“It’s not a good place to be,” said O’Donnell. “The most difficult part, by far, is managing cash flow. When you get to EBITDA positive (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortization), it is a beautiful thing.”

Next for Sol-ti is to continue on its path to expansion. O’Donnell said the company just had a national move forward which included Publix, Safeway, Target, Walmart and 7-Eleven and will continue to push on that front.