

the **Passion**  
behind the **Product**

## Jamnation

The story of this delicious jam started with love of family and the desire to share // By Neil Zevnik

Meet Gillian Reynolds, who had never before made jam in her entire life. An economics major at Stanford University, she had gravitated after graduation to a liberal think tank in Washington, D.C., for a couple years, working on policies related to low-income families and children. She knew she wanted to do something in life that would help people, but fruit entrepreneur was hardly on her to-do list.

Then Reynolds visited Brazil and became enticed by the succulent and exotic fruits that made up her morning breakfasts. When she returned to Northern California, the search was on to replicate the intensity of that experience. Could it be done? She thoroughly investigated local farmers' markets, sampling and assessing their offerings before selecting a few that filled the bill—Arctic Star nectarines, Royal Blenheim apricots, and Josephine raspberries.

Sharing this newly discovered bounty with family across the country seemed to be in order. But, as she says, "I couldn't ship a carton of raspberries or a basket of nectarines to New York City."

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### The Passion

So she decided to make jam. And after 40 batches of jams in 30 days, her fingers were fruit-stained and her heart was hooked—and her friends were urging her to share her concoctions with the world at large.

As she contemplated making the move to full-time jam making, Reynolds brought a unique set of circumstances and experiences to the canning table. The child of a family of "foodies," she was challenged to create flavor profiles that were out of the ordinary; her social consciousness dictated her approach to sourcing; and her background in economics made her aware of the impact of global trade on farmers in developing countries. She was determined to utilize Fair Trade sugar and spices from those farmers. And her commitment to clean eating insisted that she find a way to make her jam as wholesome and nutritious as possible.

With her family's blessing and assistance, Reynolds plunged head-first into the jam pot. Thus was born an array of internationally inspired creations with evocative names: Turkey gave rise to "Rose to the Grindstone," Morocco can be sensed in "To Peach His Own," and London expresses itself in "Cardamom Knows Zest." (For



Reynolds uses local, organic fruit from small Northern California farms and Fairtrade sugar and spices in her jams.

more flavors, see [jamnationjams.com](http://jamnationjams.com).)

Reynolds developed a network of local organic farmers that she relies upon for her fruit. "All of the farms are organic, and they're all family farms. I'm on the phone with almost all of my farmers. If there's a heat wave, we do the fruit early and we're in the kitchen late. If it rains, there are no strawberries that week, so we label. Our schedule is dictated by the fruit."

The spices she uses are all Fair Trade and Certified Organic, supporting sustainable growth and practices in developing countries. And with 20–40 percent less sugar than traditional jams—and no pectin—Jamnation places the focus squarely on the fruit, creating sublime tastes that are as healthy as jam gets.

Reynolds also discovered that creating these succulent concoctions could help her realize her life's dream of helping people. "I found working on a consumer product is one of the most direct ways you can have an impact. Changing consumer behavior is really exciting to me."

And making a whole lot of lives better with jam is about as sweet as it gets.

Neil Zevnik is a private chef in Los Angeles who tends to the culinary needs of the rich and famous; blogs about food, nutrition, and the environment for *The Huffington Post*; and volunteers with marine mammal rescue whenever he can. Learn more at [neilzevnik.com](http://neilzevnik.com).