



Making It In Michigan 2018

SUCCESS STORY



The Popped Kernel

Entrepreneurial inspiration comes in many forms. For Geri and Mike Aprile, the spark was ignited by their niece who created a startup plan for a gourmet popcorn business as part of her MBA program. When she took the plan a step further and actually started producing gourmet popcorn and selling at farm markets, the Apriles were not only impressed with what she was able to achieve in a short time but were motivated by a desire to start a business from scratch with a product they loved. When their niece completed her MBA, she discontinued her business, but the Apriles took the leap and launched The Popped Kernel in 2012. While neither of them had previous production, distribution or sales experience in the food business, they developed their first set of recipes, production processes, packaging and marketing and honed their skills by selling at farm markets and events.

They signed their first retailer in late 2012 and began expanding the business footprint in the Metro Detroit area. Over the next six years, the business has grown exponentially, now with an entire line of gourmet popcorn flavors and products that are hand-crafted and packaged in their Shelby Township facility by their employees.

The product line is currently distributed in over 50 specialty retailers, markets, deli's, bakeries, confectioners and wineries across Michigan. They also have a Factory Store at their production facility and sell online at thepoppedkernelco.com. The Apriles plan to double their retail sales locations in Michigan over next 18 months and increase direct and online special occasion sales as well as corporate gourmet popcorn gifts and event sales.



Geri and Mike Aprile

"Our MSU Product Center counselors have been invaluable resources for pricing, packaging, marketing and distribution information and guidance throughout the process of growing our business."

"Geri and Mike have been very successful at increasing their production capacity and satisfying growing market demand. Good management practices have enabled them to keep a watchful eye on pricing along with distribution methods. It is a pleasure to see this business expand even when the heat is on!"

Mark Thomas

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