

## **Back to the Roots Raises \$2M from Top Food and Tech CEOs to Undo Food**

*Food, technology, and sustainability leaders come together to support the Oakland, CA food company in its mission to Undo Food™*

OAKLAND, CA ([PRWEB](#)) June 09, 2015 -- OAKLAND, CA (June 9, 2015) – Today, [Back to the Roots®](#) announced the close of its first round of funding, raising \$2M to accelerate its mission to undo food and build the “new Kraft Foods.” The round was led by Oakland, CA-based organization Fund Good Jobs, and brought together a group of high-profile food, technology, and sustainability leaders including Annie’s CEO John Foraker, Clif Bar CEO Kevin Cleary, LivingSocial Co-Founder Aaron Batalion, UrbanSitter President Jessica Steel (former Pandora EVP), Jamba Juice CEO James White, Stonyfield Founder Gary Hirshberg, Tom’s Shoes Founder Blake Mycoskie, former Yahoo! International President Brian Steel, Joie de Vivre Hotels Founder & Airbnb Head of Global Hospitality Chip Conley, and best-selling author Michael Pollan.

Founded in 2009 by college seniors Alejandro Velez and Nikhil Arora, Back to the Roots has grown from a fraternity kitchen experiment to a national brand with award-winning products sold in over 14,000 stores worldwide.

“We’re excited and honored to have such an incredible group of investors behind us as we work to undo food and connect the next generation back to where it comes from,” said co-CEOs Alejandro Velez and Nikhil Arora.

The company is using the funding to advance product development for its Ready to Grow and Ready to Eat lines, scale retail distribution, grow its team, and integrate its products more deeply into school districts and classroom curriculums.

"We recognize that good food has the power to create good jobs, and it all starts with the ingredient of mission-aligned capital," said Sean Daniel Murphy, President, Fund Good Jobs.

Built on the foundation of its first two products—the Mushroom Mini Farm and Water Garden—Back to the Roots recently expanded its Ready to Grow line with the new Garden-in-a-Can, and launched a Ready to Eat line with Organic Stoneground Flakes cereal, Organic Breakfast Toppers, and Organic Stoneground Crisps snack packs.

“We believe the future of food goes beyond natural and organic—it’s built on radical transparency and simple, delicious ingredients,” said Velez and Arora. “Our R&D team isn’t food scientists in lab coats, it’s our grandparents. We want to create food that they’ll recognize, and bring it to a new generation through fun, playful, and sustainable product design.”

This approach has attracted customers, retailers, and industry leaders alike. “What Back to the Roots stands for reminds me of when I was a kid with my grandma, and I’m all in with that,” explains James White, CEO of Jamba Juice.

Jessica Steel, President of UrbanSitter, adds “I’m in because Back to the Roots is at the forefront of creating awareness in the next generation about where our food comes from.”

## BACK TO THE ROOTS INVESTORS

### Fund Good Jobs

David Barber, Owner Blue Hill Farm  
Aaron Batalion, Co-Founder LivingSocial  
Elliott Bisnow, Founder Summit Series  
Kevin Cleary, CEO Clif Bar  
Chip Conley, Founder Joie de Vivre Hotels & Head of Global Hospitality Airbnb  
John Foraker, President Annie's  
Chris Gallo, Owner E. & J. Gallo Winery  
Gary Hirshberg, Founder & Chairman Stonyfield  
Nicolas Jammet, Nathaniel Ru & Jonathan Neman, Co-Founders sweetgreen  
Blake Mycoskie, Founder Tom's Shoes  
Carol Olson, CEO Organic Expansion  
Judith Pollan, Artist  
Michael Pollan, Best-selling Author  
Courtney Reum, Founder Veev Life  
Joel Solomon, Chairman Renewal Partners  
Brian Steel, former President Yahoo! International  
Jessica Steel, President UrbanSitter (former EVP Pandora)  
Mary C. Stranahan, D.O., Founder High Stakes Foundation  
Jon Weinberg, VP Strategy Sephora  
James White, CEO Jamba Juice

## ABOUT BACK TO THE ROOTS

Back to the Roots was founded in 2009 by then college seniors Alejandro Velez and Nikhil Arora after discovering how to grow gourmet mushrooms on recycled coffee grounds. Since then, Back to the Roots has evolved from urban mushroom farming to a thriving business on a mission to undo food and reconnect families to it through fun, innovative, and delicious Ready to Grow and Ready to Eat products (Organic Mushroom Farm, Water Garden, Garden-in-a-Can, Organic Stoneground Flakes, Organic Breakfast Toppers, and Organic Stoneground Crisps). Back to the Roots currently sells its products in over 14,000 stores worldwide, including Whole Foods Market, Target, Costco, The Home Depot, Nordstrom, Petco, Cost Plus World Market, Loblaws, Giant Eagle, Wegmans, The Fresh Market, Crate & Barrel, Urban Outfitters, Safeway, and Kroger.

Nikhil and Alejandro have been honored with several awards recognizing their efforts in sustainability and entrepreneurship including BusinessWeek's "Top 25 Entrepreneurs under 25," Inc.'s "30 Under 30," Inc. 500, Forbes' "30 Under 30," and CNN's "10 Next Entrepreneurs to Watch." In addition, Back to the Roots was named a 2013 Martha Stewart Top Ten American Made honoree and recognized by President Obama as Champions of Change.



**Contact Information**

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