

## Katy Family Turns Dream to Reality

Wrights of Texas Fresh Salsa is made with you in mind  
By Sandra Meineke



*Rick and Peggy Wright end their day of salsa preparation by boxing up the finished product to go to market.*

The dream began 25 years ago. The reality only happened in the last two years. But, for fresh salsa lovers, the wait was worth it.

Two years ago, Rick and Peggy Wright, 30-year Katy residents, quit their jobs and jumped heart and soul into their own business — Wrights of Texas Fresh Salsa. They introduced their product at the Round Top Antique Festival in April 2007. In 2008, they entered the Houston Hot Sauce Festival and came away with second place ribbons in the Red Sauce and Habanero divisions.

Wrights of Texas Fresh Salsa was developed from an old San Antonio home-style family recipe. Peggy, who grew up in San Antonio, had been making the salsa for years for parties, Christmas gifts, family gatherings and other festive occasions. “Our friends and family have enjoyed it for more than 25 years,” Peggy said. “Everyone who has tried it kept saying ‘This sauce is great! Y’all should market this!’”

After much thought and encouragement, the Wrights decided to make their salsa available to the public. “We have always talked about doing the salsa,” Peggy said. “Since we are now empty nesters, we thought it was a good time to go for it.” The Wrights’ children, Kyle and Aubrey, graduates of Taylor High School and Texas Tech University, were there to support them, along with other friends and family

members. Jeff and Susan Smith, owners of Hasta la Pasta, are neighbors. They offered the Wrights the use of a small kitchen in the restaurant and use of refrigerated storage facilities to prepare and store their product. “We financed the business ourselves,” Rick said. “We didn’t borrow money; we have no debt. And, we were making a profit in the first six months.”



*The Wrights got some help from son, Kyle, and daughter, Aubrey, at the 2007 Houston Hot Sauce Festival.*

The Wrights make two products—a red sauce and a green sauce, available in mild, medium, and hot habanero. It can be purchased in 16-ounce jars at all five Houston area Whole Foods Markets and at Hubble and Hudson in The Woodlands. It’s also available on line in 16-ounce and 32-ounce sizes. The Wrights’ plan is to stay small and local. Their market is Texas, primarily the Houston area. But, they do ship orders across the country. “Our salsa is refrigerated from the time we make it until it reaches the buyer, and we don’t make it until it’s ordered,” Rick said. “We cold ship fresh to the buyer’s door in a reusable foam chest to ensure the highest quality when it arrives.”

The salsa is made from all raw ingredients. It is not cooked and contains no preservatives. “We use the best ingredients we can find. Everything is visually inspected and hand done; garlic is hand squeezed,” Peggy said. “We use a Number One Roma tomato, which adds bulk and keeps the product from being too liquidy.” The product has a projected refrigerator life of 21 days for the green salsa and 28 days for the red.

The Wrights do everything together—purchase the produce, make the salsa, market the product, put labels on the jars and distribute and demonstrate the product. Rick checks the stores twice a week to see what needs to be replaced. “Going into business with your spouse is interesting,” Peggy said, “but I always kind of knew that we could do it.” The Wrights have been together since they met as students at Texas Christian University more than 30 years ago.

Originally, they only made red salsa. They added the green salsa this past summer during the tomato scare. “We pulled our red product from the markets, just to be safe, even though the tomatoes we used were not affected by the recall,” Rick said. While the red salsa was off the market, Peggy created the green recipe using avocados instead of tomatoes, and now the green medium is their best seller.

Rick says sales have quadrupled over this time last year, and each week’s sales are above the previous week’s. Once people discover the fresh taste, they can’t get enough of it. One family in Sugar Land buys

a case a week—each family member has their own favorite variety. The Wrights purchase jars by the pallet —2,880 at a time. They are already looking into opening their own facility because the kitchen at Hasta la Pasta will soon be too small to accommodate the increasing demand for the product.

Rick and Peggy usually have one helper in the kitchen on production days, but are beginning to need more. They manufacture the salsa on Wednesday and distribute on Thursday and Friday. On Fridays and Saturdays, they are in the stores doing tastings. Peggy loves meeting the customers. She hands over each jar with a smile bigger than Texas and says, “I made this just for you.” Peggy, who got her love of food from her mother, says she envisions who will be using the salsa while she is preparing it. “A lot of love goes into each jar.”



*On Fridays and Saturdays, Peggy and Rick Wright are in various Whole Foods Markets offering free samples of Wrights of Texas Salsa to shoppers.*

The closest Whole Foods Market to Katy is at Westheimer and Wilcrest. The salsa is in the dairy section there. In larger stores, Wrights of Texas Fresh Salsa is usually found in a small refrigerated case near the rest of the salsas.

New recipes are in the works, but in the meantime Peggy suggested several ways to use the red salsa: as a dip for egg tacos, mixed with rice or as a spicy cocktail sauce for shrimp and crab. The green salsa is great with fish tacos, chicken or white fish. Either variety can be used as a spread for tuna sandwiches or to add zest to tomato soup. “Think outside the box,” Peggy says, and remember, she “made this just for you.”

For more information or to order on line, go to [www.wrightsoftexas.com](http://www.wrightsoftexas.com).