

BAREFRUIT CASE STUDY

NI SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND R&D



FRUITFUL SMOOTHIES

It may have seemed that there was no room for another smoothie brand on the supermarket shelves, but by using a superior high-pressure process to maintain the nutritional value of her ingredients, Rosemary Cowan was able to give her Puro Fruit smoothies a unique selling point that has seen her company, Barefruit Products, go from strength to strength.

In February 2006, Rosemary Cowan, a senior financial services manager, began paving the way for an unlikely career change. Initially she had the idea of starting her own smoothie bar, but later realised that she could reach a larger market by manufacturing smoothies instead. Her idea of offering customers a freshly-made smoothie using superior quality ingredients remained the driving force behind the development of Puro Fruits.

Having approached Invest NI with her idea, Rosemary was put in contact with the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) who introduced her to a high-pressure process which would give her products a competitive edge. The process, which involves submerging the bottled fruit drinks in ambient water in a high pressure processing machine, allows for the high retention of the fruits' Vitamin C content. It also enables the product to stay fresh with a shelf life of over 21 days.

This gave Rosemary's Purofruit products a real competitive edge against established competitors. Through her research she had discovered that, in order to prolong the shelf-life of their products, the majority of smoothie manufacturers were using a pasteurization technique which can destroy up to 30% of Vitamin C content.

Rosemary's business, now approaching its second year anniversary, has since achieved significant success. Barefruit Products has gone from producing 500 bottles of Puro Fruit a week to over 5,000 and now has major contracts with both Sainsbury's and Tesco. The business is growing so fast that the 2,000sq ft premises in Dundonald Enterprise Park is being doubled, new recruits have been taken on, and new machinery is being purchased, including a high pressurisation machine which means that the manufacturing process will be completed on site. It is also hoped that the award-winning Puro Fruit Smoothies will soon be appearing on supermarket shelves in the Republic of Ireland and the UK.

