

Kiwi couple blamed for bagel mania

A bagel is a bagel is a bagel. Right? Not when they're ABE'S® Real Bagels.

With ABE'S® Real Bagels you also get recipes, a cyberspace bagel café, a toaster and branded merchandise, an extremely amusing and informative web site ... oh, and a baker's dozen of different varieties of bagels. And, as owners Megan Sargent and Brent Milburn will tell you, you also get a lot more.

Megan and Brent founded ABE'S® in 1996. Their aim: to take advantage of a gap in the market and introduce bagels to an uneducated New Zealand public.

Now the company distributes its delicious steam-baked bagels to Foodtown and Woolworths supermarkets throughout the country.

The business has been so successful, Megan and Brent have downsized the retail operation to concentrate on developing the wholesale side of ABE'S®.

Like all good entrepreneurs, the bagel pioneers have a passion for what they're doing.

When they opened the first ABE'S® Real Bagels bakery and café in Auckland seven years ago, the duo had



already spent substantial time in the United States researching bagels and generally letting bagel-mania wash over them.

Megan became convinced New Zealanders would take to the taste of bagels after holidaying in the country that is the unofficial home of the bagel. Brent followed her



to America to learn how to bake authentic bagels.

Together they bought a set of bagel equipment.

In 1996 they brought this knowledge and enthusiasm back to New Zealand, calling on the bagel's Hebrew heritage for the brand name Abe, short for Abraham.

Now the company is New Zealand's biggest bagel baker and employs more than 30 people.

Originally the pair envisioned ABE'S® to be a chain of retail outlets, but the focus changed when Progressive Enterprises asked them to supply bagels for its supermarkets three years ago.

Supermarket orders were initially filled from the

inner-city bagel bakery but increasing demand meant a bigger Auckland-based wholesale facility had to be developed to supply supermarkets throughout the North Island.

In January 2003 the company expanded again, opening a café and bakery in Christchurch to supply South Island supermarkets.

ABE'S® was the first bagel-baker in New Zealand to steam-bake producing a slightly softer, longer-keeping bagel than the traditional boiled-then-baked

product.

Megan and Brent have also recently begun producing low-fat bagel crisps and they now expect to expand the company's production line to keep up with demand.

Originally made by the Jewish community in Poland about 400 years ago, Bagels were at one time given to women as a traditional gift after childbirth.

Jewish settlers last century brought bagels to the United States. Check out ABE'S® Real Bagels fun and informative web site at www.bagels.co.nz for recipes and merchandise and lots more about Bagels.

