

Most popular

Seeking a way to combine her food obsessions and zest for traveling to far-away lands, Jean Arnold, a graduate of Le Cordon Bleu in London and formerly a corporate finance advisor, launched 479° Popcorn this past September—just two years after the idea first popped into her head. Named for the perfect temperature for popping corn, 479° Popcorn merges a locavore ethic with addictive, exotic flavors in a line of bold-tasting gourmet popcorn handmade in small batches. The eight current varieties include Madras Curry Coconut and Cashews; Black Truffle and White Cheddar; and Chipotle Caramel and Almonds. Arnold sources almost all of her ingredients locally, including butter from Straus Family Creamery and spices from Tierra Vegetables, and everything that goes into the kettle is certified organic. You can find this snackworthy local treat at Bi-Rite Market, Blue Fog Market, Cheese Plus, Draeger's, Gump's, Rainbow Grocery, and Sweet Dish, and online at www.479popcorn.com.

Why did you start 479°?

To do something I'm passionate about. I think I've finally found my calling.

Why do you source locally and from small, family-owned farms and suppliers?

From a sustainable standpoint, locally just makes so much sense. From a product-quality perspective, I have found that (fortunately) Northern California produces some of the best raw ingredients in the world. From a community perspective, I strongly believe

in working with and supporting other local companies. It's like working with a family. We support each other and exchange ideas. We rely on each for inspiration and support.



Did you have any previous business experience?

Earlier my husband and I bought a small, dilapidated business and turned it a profitable entity. There's so much to running a business that you don't get to experience working in a large company.

Do you have any local role models?

Alice Waters, for obvious reasons, and [chocolatier] Michael Rechiutti for supporting small, local vendors and his dedication to our local food community.

What personality traits of yours have come in handy?

Creativity and perseverance.

What's your biggest challenge right now?

Not having enough personal time. It's like running a marathon but with no end in sight. So, the trick is to remember to focus on self-care. This spring, we got pregnant. It was a big surprise to us—we've been married for five years and planned on having children at some point, but not in the heart of the launch phase. Although it's been a real blessing, it added that much



stress to our lives.

Have you made any big mistakes to date?

I don't really see things as being "failures." When things don't work out the way I had hoped or intended them to be, this becomes a crossroad with a sign that leads me to a different path. I am a firm believer that if you work smart and diligently, things work out for the best. It always does.

How many employees do you have?

Mainly it's just me right now! I have a production assistant who helps me in the kitchen. With the birth of our first child I will definitely need more help.

What's your favorite flavor?

Oh, that's like asking which finger I prefer. They are all my darlings. [Edible San Francisco staff favorite: Fleur de Sel Caramel]

How do recommend eating 479°?

Pair it with wine or beer. For instance, the Black Truffle and White Cheddar Cheese with Pinot Noir...simply divine! Or sprinkle some of the Fleur de Sel Caramel on top of homemade vanilla ice cream.

Which food establishments do you like to eat or hang out at?

Chez Panisse, Blue Barn, Zuni Café, Lettus Organic, Pizzaiolo, Bi-Rite Creamery, and Blue Bottle Coffee.

—RACHEL COLE