

NJSBDC Success 2007 Winners / 2007-NJ-City-University-Sta

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Often, one needs to look no further than his or her background or upbringing for a recipe for small business success. That is what

Masahiko Fukamo did when he and his father-in-law Tadashi Yamanoi made the leap of faith (and the journey to the NJSBDC at New Jersey City University) to start Eat More Local. Masa's story is an example of an individual who used a traditional family recipe and had the confidence and expertise to commit his beliefs to a viable and dynamic business.

Eat More Local began in April 2007. The company prepares and sells sushi, but not just your typical variety. The sushi's rice is prepared with a special honey recipe. Typical sushi rice is made with sugar. As a result, Eat More Local's sushi has a very distinct and rich taste that makes it far superior to that of its competitors.

Masahiko and Tadashi contacted the NJSBDC at New Jersey City University the following month for assistance with their business plan and advice on some pending contracts with A & P foods. They also were not sure if they needed more start-up funds. NJSBDC business consultant Al Izzi assisted them with understanding A & P contracts and suggested where Masa should look for negotiating points with A & P and other potential clients. Al helped them completely restructure their business plan and put together a loan package for financing. As a result of the financial restructuring help they received from Al, Eat More Local obtained a \$20,000 loan from UCEDC.

Since then, Eat More Local received the sushi concession from the A&P in Jersey City. The success of their first store resulted in Masa being awarded contracts for two additional A&P stores in Hudson County. What started as a two-person company five months ago is now poised to add six to ten more employees to support the growth. Additionally, with the NJSBDC's assistance, the owners are preparing to mass-produce and distribute sushi to major food chains and smaller food markets. Sales are

200 percent ahead of forecast and profits for the first year are projected at more than 30 percent.

Sharing the credit for their success, Masa feels that “Without the SBDC and specifically Al Izzi, we would have tried to start a business without proper planning and preparation. We thought we had enough money to start our business. After Al reviewed our business plan he was quick to point out that we needed more money for startup and more importantly, working capital.”