



Eileen Mizrahi

Entrepreneur, 62, Ocean Township
... in her own words

I HAD ALWAYS LOVED eating sugars, sweets and all types of candies. Unfortunately, this habit became a huge wake-up because I developed hypoglycemia at age 23. I was a sugar addict. The diagnosis was a huge wake-up call that was the turning point in my life.

MY DOCTOR introduced me to nutrition, vitamins and healthy living. This is when I truly realized that diet had such a huge impact. I began reading all about nutrition and started going to cooking classes to learn how to make and eat healthy meals. For a while, being treated for the hypoglycemia, I couldn't even eat a red onion or a carrot or an orange pepper, because they have some natural sugar content.

ABOUT 30 YEARS AGO, I began making homemade granola for the kids. I found myself making more so that the kids' friends had some and also to give away to my friends and family. Because I was always looking for healthy snacks for children – one of their favorites was my homemade, natural granola.

I BECAME very well known through giving fresh, homemade granola to everyone – the dentist, the people at the post office and the bank. I would just bag some up and bring it with me to give to people.

ONE COLD January morning in the winter of 2005, I remember clearly, it turned out to be a Jersey snow day, when nobody goes out. I began to make my granola ... and made 10 pounds. I suddenly took out my food scale and weighed a half-pound, then I put it in a plastic bag. It was during that activity I saw where I was going to go.

I GOT on the phone with a friend who asked, 'So, what's new, Eileen?' And I replied, 'I'm in business!' Through the years, friends would encourage me, telling me they loved my granola, but I really should start marketing it somehow, that I couldn't just keep giving it all away.

I PUT LABELS saying 'Natural Granola' on the bags – nothing fancy – and my brother would take it to work in Manhattan. He gave me very important feedback: People would dig to the bottom for the biggest chunks because that's what they liked.

SO I WENT back to the kitchen and experimented to come up with the perfect consistency. Instead of tiny pieces like conventional granolas, I was able to create the right mixture so that there were many large chunks of delicious snack-worthy granola.

MY FAMILY and friends encouraged me to market to stores. Marty, my husband, has been my inspiration and has supported me in all my endeavors.

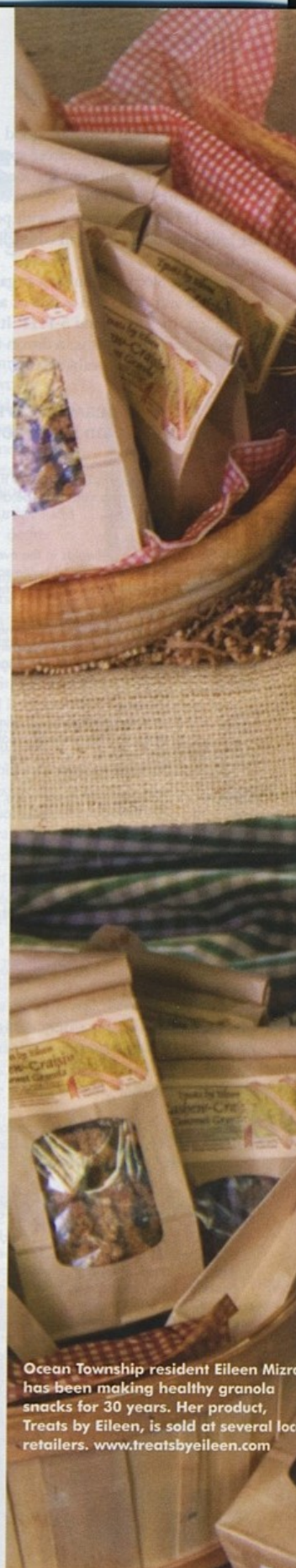
MY FIRST DEMO was in Dean's Natural Market in Ocean in the summer of 2005. I realized it was all about presentation, and not many people had a favorable perception of granola, like it was birdseed or just not flavorful, although they knew it was healthy. I created a beautiful table and sold seven bags in a half an hour on a weekday when there wasn't that many customers in the store.

AT ONE DEMO, a woman said she would never touch granola. Marty pleaded with her to just try it. I remember her reaction, she was in a state of bliss! She immediately bought a bag. It was a joyous feeling.

MY WHOLE FAMILY is now involved. My children, their spouses and my grandchildren all have helped out to benefit the business. They all participate and really enjoy doing so. If there is anything truly made with love, it's the granola called 'Treats by Eileen!'

AND TO THIS DAY, I just simply love putting a smile on someone's face. I am blessed with a loving family and wonderful friends. And of course, I'm blessed to be able to make people happy with my granola! It enables me to give back, and to meet and interact with caring and interesting people. ✦

INTERVIEW BY LISA SCHOFIELD PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER ACKERMAN



Ocean Township resident Eileen Mizrahi has been making healthy granola snacks for 30 years. Her product, Treats by Eileen, is sold at several local retailers. www.treatsbyeileen.com