



BUSINESS PROFILE



CARIBBEAN SPECIALTY FOODS

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

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ABOUT CARIBBEAN SPECIALTY FOODS

- **Company status** : Limited.
- **Year of registration** : 2008.
- **Number of employees** : 5 employees, including 3 women.
- **Business sector** : Agri food processing.



Hesma Tyson – Managing Director & Founder

Hesma Tyson founded Caribbean Specialty Foods Company Limited to change the way hot sauces were made, without artificial ingredients, and to see her favourite condiment on the world stage. In 2024, Hesma became Entrepreneur of the Year, by the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce.

Hesma has been involved in food processing for over 15 years, from which she was inspired through her experience blending sauces in her kitchen at home. In addition to being Managing Director of Caribbean Specialty Foods, Hesma is a Business Mentor for Youth Business Trinidad and Tobago, where she assists young entrepreneurs in starting their business in the agro-processing industry. She also provides consultancy services to startups and MSMEs who wish grow their businesses.



Funded by
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CONTEXT

Background

Caribbean Specialty Foods Co. Ltd was established in 2008 by Hesma Tyson. By 2019, the brand name 'CariBelle Foods' was trademarked, representing the Founder's mother who was of Carib ancestry, from Moruga. The company was formed following three years of research and development, where the founder did not have any formal training in food technology, but was eventually able to make her first batch of natural, shelf stable hot sauce. This technology provides the foundation for manufacturing the company's present products line. To this day, Caribbean Specialty Foods produces unique, natural, and vegan Caribbean condiments, including four lines of hot sauces, three lines of dips and green seasoning – all of which are free from artificial colours, preservatives, and flavours. The products are inspired by Caribbean flavours and traditional foods, and are made from locally produced raw materials. Since its beginning, the company has aimed to make natural Caribbean condiments and market them throughout the CARICOM region and internationally, in North America and the European Union.

CariBelle represents unique, naturally Caribbean products, inspired by Caribbean cultures, flavours and traditions.

The enterprise has two main goals:

- To make natural Caribbean condiments.
- To market the products throughout CARICOM, North America, and the EU.

They are committed to *"Bringing exotic Caribbean flavours to the world....Naturally"*.

Relationships with the community

The company utilises raw materials that are available locally and regionally, thereby assisting local farmers in distributing their produce. Its raw materials are sourced by farmers in the locality of its factory in Moruga, a rural farming community. In the year that the factory began production, the founder Hesma formed the Moruga Sauce Farmers Group, comprising of farmers who have agreed to provide produce to the tenants of the Moruga Agro Processing Industrial Park.

The company is also recruiting its work force for the factory from community members in the local area.

PRODUCTS AND MARKET

Main products

The CariBelle Foods product lines includes hot sauces, dips and seasonings made from locally available ingredients, with a shelf life of 15 months.

The four products of the hot sauce line include Tamarind, Mango, Ooh La La and Rum Flavoured.

The three products in the dip lines are Tamarind and Mango, Lime and Mango and Tomato and Cilantro. The green seasoning is made from a variety of herbs and spices.



Lines of hot sauce



Lines of dip



Exotic seasoning



Tomato and cilantro dip



Tamarind and mango dip



Lime and mango dip

Main markets

Caribbean Specialty Foods products can be found in local grocery stores, other stores, mini-marts, retailers and souvenir shops. The company is also exporting through an online Caribbean distributor.

Main services

Caribbean Specialty Foods provides Contract Manufacturing services, white labelling and consultancy services to MSMEs.

Certifications

All CariBelle products are approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration.

INNOVATIONS: MILESTONES AND EXPANSION PLANS

In 2021, the company was able to achieve its market goals through its new line of products and new packaging. This came at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic interrupted the company's packaging

supply of glass bottles for a duration of 5 months, caused by disruptions in shipping. This led the company to experiment with pouches for the dips, as the dips had become their fastest moving products.

Since this challenge, Caribbean Specialty Foods has implemented this packaging and received positive customer feedback on the product's price point and packaging which is not only attractive but has other benefits including weight, size and handling.

Caribbean Specialty Foods was allocated a factory space in 2021 by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, located in the rural farming community Moruga. The company obtained a grant from the Ministry of Trade and Industry which allowed it to purchase equipment for furthering its expansion. By 2022, production began and the fresh produce from farmers in the surrounding area supplied the raw materials for manufacturing.

Before the factory, the company was unable to supply large quantities at a favourable price, which made it less attractive to distributors. With the facility in Moruga and the introduction of pouches, Caribbean Specialty Foods has seen growing interest in its products, including large increases in local sales. The company expects export sales to follow suite as they begin to showcasing the new pouches at various expos internationally.



Dips in new pouch packaging



Factory

SUCCESS FACTORS AND LESSONS LEARNED

While the journey of Caribbean Specialty Foods has not been without its challenges in terms of finances and market breakthroughs, the company has been supported by several institutions such as ExporTT, IICA (Trinidad and Tobago), NAMDEVCO, Ministry of Trade and Industry and many encouraging individuals.

Hesma has attended many expos locally and abroad. For example, in November 2022, Caribbean Specialty Foods was one of the participants in the online IICA Caribbean Virtual Trade Mission, co-organised with COLEAD. This provided the company with the opportunity to establish and build market linkages.

As a female entrepreneur, Hesma joined the She Trades TT movement which was formed by the

International Trade Centre (ITC) to work towards greater economic opportunities for women everywhere and promote a women-inclusive, fairer global trade. This has allowed her company free access to important training in export trade and networking with other like-minded individuals. Hesma was recently selected to be a panellist at the She Trades event “Celebrating Women in Entrepreneurship” on International Women's Day in 2023.

On November 7th, 2024, the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce awarded Hesma the 2024 Entrepreneurship of the Year. This is the premier award of the business community in the country and was well received by those in the SME agribusiness space.



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