

DEVIL'S FOOT

• BEVERAGE COMPANY •

ASHEVILLE, NC

WWW.DEVILSFOOTBREW.COM

A beverage company using organic roots and fruits to create locally brewed farm-to-can craft non-alcoholic beverages.

- 2018 NC IDEA MICRO GRANT RECIPIENT
- 2019 NC IDEA SEED GRANT RECIPIENT



Entrepreneurship, for me, is all about the journey - from creating the business concept to earning revenue to fulfilling a mission. It is not just about driving revenue, it is a way to an end goal. For most of my career, I worked in conservation nonprofits, and I saw how some unique companies aligned their model to grow company profits while also supporting social causes. This is how we built the Devil's Foot business model - revenue, scale and growth in line with drive, mission and a local, community focus.

The big spark for Devil's Foot was when my wife and I found out we were pregnant. To celebrate, I took her to one of Asheville's breweries but there were no non-alcoholic beverages she could drink without opting for a sugary soda or water. We began wondering why a crafted drink for these occasions did not exist. I came to the realization that another option should exist. We quickly agreed that one should - a drink that is crafted, organic, low-sugar and non-alcoholic for any celebration.

We started making our own ginger beer in the backyard. With enough of our friends that were brewers, we had access to the equipment and the knowledge of how to use it. We got to the point that it was really good and decided we should take the leap to start selling. We started making five-gallon batches with different levels of spice and sweetness and ultimately perfected our ginger beer product. From there, we quickly got into sparkling lemonades and limeades as we saw opportunity there. The limeade is super fresh and one of my favorites and reminds me of the island life! We knew other companies had similar flavors, but none were organic and low sugar, so we knew we had a good niche in the market.

A number of colleagues from my past jobs were very supportive in our early days. I was also fortunate to be connected to one of the original owners of Earth Fare who has provided really helpful guidance. We certainly are grateful for an extremely supportive community in Asheville where friends have stood by us from day one by placing us in venues all over town.

One of our core principles is working with and giving back to our community to support the good work being done by others. From the beginning, we have worked to support groups in fields of environmental, humanitarian, social service, entertainment and



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—BEN COLVIN, PRESIDENT AND CO-FOUNDER

other causes. When we provide cans for benefit concerts, fundraisers, arts programs or school groups, it is a powerful way for us to pay forward the love we have been given. We once ran an event where a group of after school kids came in to design their own soda. We got all of the ingredients for them and juiced everything by hand. They collectively drew a label for their soda creation. When we brought the finished product back to them, they were so excited. We look forward to doing more things like this and sharing our story of entrepreneurship with all generations.

We started Devil's Foot with our own limited startup capital and truly bootstrapped our company. When we heard about NC IDEA from a colleague and mentor, I put some of my previous grant writing skills to work to submit for the opportunity. In 2018, we won the MICRO grant and used it to buy our first delivery van and additional packaging. With this support from NC IDEA, we were able to get ahead of purchasing orders. They saw our success and hustle and actually suggested that we return and apply for their SEED grant, which we successfully won in 2019.

In my past experience as a nonprofit professional, I have learned that the most effective grants are the ones that build authentic relationships with people. It's not a submission for money and that's it. There is a conversation and discussion that goes on to create a great partnership. The people at NC IDEA are so helpful and responsive. They make sure I get connected with people who help support and guide me through our growth and scalability. We couldn't be where we are this fast without NC IDEA.



**SOLD IN OVER 300
LOCATIONS, INCLUDING
EARTH FARE STORES,
THROUGHOUT THE
SOUTHEAST**

We had to make some initial production changes to adapt during the pandemic. With grocery and retail stores open, we have been fortunate that sales were able to hold on, though far below our projections. The slower production during the time of the pandemic gave us more time to have conversations with grocery stores like Whole Foods and Ingles. Earth Fare stores have been big supporters and their re-opening will be a big help to rebound from COVID disruptions. In January 2020, we also signed with a distributor, Artisan Beverage Group, out of Charlotte to move our cans across the state - and they've sold well even through the pandemic.

2020 was going to be our first year to celebrate selling a half million cans before COVID-19 slowed the market. However, we are looking forward to still having a reason to celebrate our accomplishments at the close of the year.

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