

VENTURA BUSINESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY: VENTURA LIMONCELLO COMPANY

Recipe for Success: The City of Ventura Business Assistance Program and the EDC-VC's Small Business Development Center helped the Ventura Limoncello Company flourish.

James Carling and Manuela Zaretti-Carling began the Ventura Limoncello Company in 2007 to be the premier producer of Limoncello liqueurs in the United States. They have accomplished this goal and plan to continue the trend.

The Carlings use Manuela's Italian grandmother's recipe for the liqueurs, which include the company's flagship Limoncello Originale, Limoncello Crema and Oranbecello, a seasonal blood orange liqueur. San Francisco World Spirits Competition named Limoncello Originale America's highest rated limoncello for four straight years.



James Carling and Manuela Zaretti-Carling

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BRANCHING OUT

Looking for ways to expand the business, James Carling attended a seminar sponsored by the City of Ventura for small business manufacturers. There, he learned about the City's loan programs and discovered the Small Business Development Center (SBDC). After being introduced to SBDC advisor Carlos Conejo, James and Manuela secured two loans, one with the City and one with the Economic Development Collaborative-Ventura County (EDC-VC).

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

The funds enabled the owners to purchase a citrus washing machine and a labeling machine. "The citrus washing machine saves us a ton of man hours," said Carling. "What took us 10 hours before now takes less than two. It's the same with the labeling machine – it probably saves six to eight hours per week." Carling also worked with Conejo to update the workspace design at the company's Ventura facilities to enhance workflow.

With the increases in efficiency, Carling has even found time to update the company's packing processes and prioritize using U.S. suppliers. The company switched from imported glass from Italy for its bottles to an American source, for example. Cardboard used for shipping is now purchased from a Camarillo firm and the bottle caps come from a domestic source as well.

LOOKING BACK

"Hindsight being 20/20, the one thing I would have done differently from the beginning would be to have gone after larger distribution earlier as well as multiple states," said Carling. "Back when we were starting the company I was thinking more linearly. I was thinking that if everyone wanted my product, I wouldn't be able to meet the demand. Working with the SBDC and the City of Ventura helped me to put in place standards that will allow me to accommodate any size increase in demand."

As the demand for its products has continued to increase, Carling hired two additional employees in 2015. "A certain amount of the funds we secured were for hiring," he said. "We're planning on continuing to grow and expanding our team accordingly."