

Hot sauce maker looks to the South



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Reuben Williams checks labeled bottles of Texas Pete Hot Sauce in May at the T.W. Garner Food Co. in Winston-Salem. In recent years, the company has gained wider distribution of its hot sauce in the South, and this year it is focusing a good portion of its marketing and advertising efforts there.

Spicing it up

By Brian Louis
The Associated Press

WINSTON-SALEM — Don't look for an initial public offering of stock from T.W. Garner Food Co. or a big change in its business philosophy anytime soon. Garner, a family owned Winston-Salem company most famous for its Texas Pete Hot Sauce, is going to keep running things the way it has successfully for years.

"Our philosophy has always been steady, managed growth, and that's the way we try to do things," said Ralph E. "Reg" Garner, 49, the president of the company and a nephew of the founder of the business, Thad W. Garner.

The company, rich in tradition, continues to write new chapters in its history. In November, Garner launched an e-commerce operation selling its products over the Internet. In recent years, the company has

gained wider distribution of its hot sauce in south Florida, Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana, and this year it is focusing a good portion of its marketing and advertising efforts in these new markets.

"There are some good hot-sauce markets in the Deep South," said Harold H. "Hal" Garner, Jr., 55, the secretary and treasurer of the company. Hal Garner is also a nephew of the company's founder.

The company isn't all about Texas Pete Hot Sauce. It makes other types of sauces that carry the Texas Pete name and it also makes jams, jellies and preserves.

Texas Pete Hot Sauce, however, is the driving force for the closely held company, which sells its hot sauce to supermarkets and restaurants, mainly along the East Coast and in the South and, to a lesser extent, in the Midwest and on the West Coast.

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