

# A snack with gusto

Gustola Granola—made by a Gustafson—is healthy new snack

Angie Gustafson is the innovator behind Gusto Granola.



PHOTOS BY ROLF HAGBERG



Gusto Granola comes in four delicious flavors.

BY DAN LEMKE

Dating back to her college days, Angie Gustafson has always been a big fan of farmers markets and the local food scene. A stint in the Peace Corps exposed her even more to open air markets and the joys of locally-produced food. So it was only logical that when she started marketing her own homemade granola, the local farmers market was the place she would start.

Gustafson is a full-time mom to four active kids, including three teenage boys. She is also a runner who was looking for a healthy, go-to snack. Since she also enjoys cooking, Gustafson began experimenting with her own granola. She often shared the granola with friends and gave it out as gifts. After getting very positive feedback, she made the leap to try selling Gustola Granola at the Linden Hills farmers market beginning in 2013.

“We started at the farmers market and developed a nice fan base,” Gustafson

says. “Once it ended in October, we had people asking where they could get it.”

Soon after the farmers market closed for the season, Gustafson met with the manager of the Linden Hills Co-op to find out what it would take to get Gustola Granola onto store shelves. After meeting with Gustafson and tasting the granola, she was told “we want it, and we want it now.”

## Stiff competition

High school grocery experience and a degree in marketing provided some preparation for entering the food business, but Gustafson admits there is stiff competition for store shelf space. Even so, she says her product is well received because of what goes into the bag.

“Mine has a uniquely rich taste, a fantastic crunch and large chunks that people love,” she says. “I use expensive ingredients, but it’s a difference you can taste. I use rolled oats, egg whites, olive oil and local, real maple syrup.”

To get the granola on store shelves, Gustafson needed nutritional analysis and label information. As owner of a small, startup company, Gustafson relied on some of her food industry contacts who directed her to Charan Wadhawan at AURI’s Crookston food lab. Wadhawan provided technical assistance “that was a huge help for me to get onto store shelves,” Gustafson adds. In addition to helping with the nutritional and labeling information, Wadhawan also offered shelf-life guidance and assistance in compliance with regulations.

Because the granola is sold for retail, production moved from her home to a commercial kitchen in Minneapolis.

## Going for the gusto

The unique Gustola Granola name is derived from a combination of Gustafson’s last name and how she operates her business—with gusto. It comes in four flavors: almond-pecan-cashew, hazelnut-walnut-blueberry-cranberry, almond-coconut-cherry and pistachio-pumpkin seed-coconut-cherry.

Currently, the snack is available at whole foods stores and co-ops such as the one in Linden Hills and The Wedge Co-op in Minneapolis. But with her marketing background and belief in her product, Gustafson’s aiming for more outlets including major outdoor retailers.

“You can take it anywhere and eat it anytime. It really resonates with active folks because it has simple ingredients,” Gustafson says. “Wherever it goes, it sells.”

Gustola Granola is building a following and finding success on store shelves. New packaging suitable for the artisan granola is in the works. It’s all part of a process to which she and her family are committed.

“It can be a challenge when you are a startup, but if you want to get it into this market, you have to go big,” Gustafson adds.

Check it out at [gustolagranola.com](http://gustolagranola.com).



Gusto Granola is made from delicious ingredients including rolled oats, egg whites, olive oil and local, real maple syrup.



**AURi and Gustola Granola**

### Idea to reality:

Angie Gustafson wanted to expand the sales of her popular Gustola Granola beyond the Linden Hills Farmers Market.

### AURi’s role:

AURi scientist Charan Wadhawan provided nutritional analysis, labeling information, shelf-life guidance and assistance in compliance with regulations to help get the product on store shelves.

### Outcome:

Gustola Granola is now available in several co-ops and has a growing market.