

Healthful Crackers

What happens when a doctor's in the kitchen? Flackers, for starters.

Dr. Alison Levitt had a vision—a vision of a better snack cracker.

A Minneapolis MD whose practice incorporates approaches from holistic medicine (she studied nutrition and herbal medicine in India before going to med school), Levitt also has developed products for Minneapolis-based retailer Intelligent Nutrients. There she created a

number of nutritional supplements, including a “food bar,” a chocolate bar infused with added nutrients and protein powder. Last year, she decided to try making a healthy cracker that didn't taste like cardboard. She recalls pondering, “If I make a cracker out of just flax seeds, it can't get any better . . . There's no sugar in it. There's no wheat, no gluten.” Plus, flax has a pleasantly nutty flavor.

Levitt developed the technique for making the crackers in her own kitchen. To retain nutrients, the flax seeds are first soaked in water before dehydrating so they are easier to chew. They're then formed into crackers, which are dehydrated rather

than baked. Levitt says that this preserves flax's nutrients—the naturally occurring omega-3 fatty acids, for instance, which are reduced when exposed to high temperatures.

Levitt first offered the crackers, which she named Flackers, to her patients. Then a chance meeting with Donn Kelly, whose food business background included sales at General Mills and product management at Pillsbury, made her consider commercially marketing Flackers. Soon a new company, Doctor in the Kitchen, was born. (Levitt and Kelly co-own the business.)

Levitt and Kelly started out selling three cases of Flackers to three local co-op grocers. They now have the capacity to make 30 cases per week. “We're looking to multiply that by five in the short term on a weekly basis so we can supply more and more stores,” Kelly says. In February, Doctor in the Kitchen began selling online as word of the product spread: A Chicago supermarket and other customers from outside the Twin Cities area began clamoring for Flackers after a positive review appeared in Chanhassen-based *Life Time Fitness's Experience Life* magazine. Doctor in the Kitchen plans to expand distribution in the coming year.

Flackers, which are available in dill, rosemary, and savory versions, can be found at Byerly's, Lunds, and Whole Foods, as well as local food co-ops. They are currently the only crackers made solely from flax on the market.

Doctor in the Kitchen has one other employee, who makes the crackers; Levitt and Kelly do the packing and shipping. The company recently moved into its own production facility after working out of a rented commercial kitchen. In keeping with its holistic philosophy, the company buys flax grown only in Minnesota and North Dakota.

With Flackers sales looking promising, Doctor in the Kitchen now is considering new products. “We've got a few things cooking, but we're not ready to say exactly what they are,” Kelly says.



Physician Alison Levitt went into the kitchen to make crackers; former General Mills sales guy Donn Kelly has gotten them on store shelves.

—Katie Harholdt