

Oakland School Teacher, Tonia Chappel Uses Adversity as Inspiration

Posted by **admin** on June 4th, 2010

By Tanya Dennis



Tonia Chappel with her “Tonita’s Sweet Vine Cuban Sauce”.

Oakland School financial woes have dominated the newspapers in the last year with strikes, contract negotiations and complaints that Oakland teachers are the lowest paid in the East Bay. The reality is, many teachers have had to find alternatives to supplement their income in order to pursue their first love, teaching. It’s not fair, but it is a reality.

But sometimes adversity can be the catalyst for creativity and success. Such is the case of Tonia Chappel, a teacher at Howard Elementary School. Tonia took a family secret and has taken it to market, literally. “Tonita’s Sweet Vine Cuban Sauce” is in Farmer Joe’s, the Village Market, Piedmont Grocers, Alameda Natural Grocery and Encinal Market in Alameda, Monterey Market in Berkeley, Whole Foods in Berkeley, Oakland and San Francisco, Farm Fresh in the Ferry Building San Francisco, Cal Mart in San Francisco, Gene’s Fine Foods in Pleasanton, Draeger’s Supermarket in Danville, Castro Valley Farmers Market and many more.

Tonia offers a flavor unique to American culture, a taste of Cuba! “Making my sauce was at first for fun. I enjoyed having a fresh tomato sauce for my enchiladas, and Creole dishes. My family and friends requested my food often for birthday gatherings, cook outs and special holidays, so I started jarring the sauce. It then became an item for family gifts and their friends. I’d play music when I’d make my sauce.

“Then my career path in education took a downward spin, and that’s when I really began to “Cook with Rhythm.” You can use my sauce with black beans, red beans and rice or chili beans. Try it on pulled chicken for an authentic Cuban sandwich, fish or sautéed vegetables and it really adds an extra zing to pasta. I have sliced, diced and chopped the freshest ingredients so you don’t have to! It comes in a 16 oz jar in mild and hot and the hot s just enough spice for you to still enjoy the flavor.”

“ I decided to use my administration credential in education and start my own business. I went and got help from the Renaissance Business Center in S.F. and Business Center in Oakland. Now, I’m in approximately fifteen stores with the help of mentors in the food business.”

“Tonita’s Sweet Vine Cuban Sauce, is indeed delicious. It’s nice to know I can help a fellow educator while indulging in my favorite pastime, eating. Try her sauce, you won’t be disappointed! For more information: email: www.tonitaskitchen.com or info@tonitaskitchen.com for ordering call 1-800-318-6106.

📁 Posted in [Tanya D Dennis](#)