



ALEXA WELCH EDLUND/TIMES-DISPATCH

J.C. Pierce Jr. said he "had a hard time letting it go," but the popular barbecue sauces from Pierce's Pitt Bar-B-Que are now bottled outside the family. They are sold in more than 150 stores.

Pierce overcame doubt to boost sauce-making

For more than three decades, J.C. Pierce Jr. and his family made the sauce used for meals at the Pierce's Pitt Bar-B-Que Restaurant near Williamsburg.

The family started bottling the sauce in the mid-1980s to sell to its patrons.

But now it is produced by a Virginia Beach company — and bottles of the original and honey sauce are available in more than 150 grocery stores in Virginia, North Carolina, Maryland and the District of Columbia.



GREGORY J. GILLIGAN

"We grew to a point where we couldn't keep up with the demand," he said. "We were making all of this in one kettle. It was a lot to do."

Pierce, whose father founded the restaurant in 1971 in Light-foot off Interstate 64, said he was hesitant about having someone else produce the sauces. He and his parents, who have since died, were the only ones who knew the recipe.

"This was a very difficult thing for me to do," Pierce said. "It was my family's secret. I had a hard time letting it go. I was kind of scared because I had to put a lot of trust in the person."

The first bottles came off the assembly line at Ashman Manufacturing late last summer. "I was shaking," he said.

But the product has taken off.

Ashman initially signed on Ukrop's Super Markets Inc. Now the two sauces are sold at

some Harris Teeter and Bloom stores as well as at a variety of independent and natural food stores.

The number of bottles has expanded, Pierce said.

Ashman makes about 342 cases of the 16-ounce original flavor and 214 cases of the honey barbecue sauce every three weeks. Before, Pierce estimates he was making about 25 cases a month.

The sales are strong for a product just launched and considering that distribution started nine months ago, said Tim Ashman, the manufacturing company's president.

Pierce also has made changes at the restaurant. The size of the kitchen has tripled. The dining room got a face-lift. About two dozen parking spaces have been added.

Regal buys theater

The Commonwealth 20 megaplex in Chesterfield County is now part of the Regal chain.

Regal Entertainment Group, the nation's largest theater chain, bought Consolidated Theatres, which owned the Commonwealth 20, for \$210 million.

The cinemas at Commonwealth Center at Hull Street Road and state Route 288 give Regal a megaplex in a growing part of Chesterfield.

Regal closed its theaters at Chesterfield Towne Center a year ago. It has signed a lease for a 16-screen complex in the planned Westchester Commons retail development at U.S. 60 and 288.

RoomStore World

The RoomStore plans to open a new concept store on West Broad Street near Gaskins Road in Henrico County.

The Goochland County-based chain plans to take over the former Bloom Bros. store, which closed last year, CEO Curtis Kimbrell said. The store should open in July.

The 80,000-square-foot store would carry a broader product assortment of furniture and related products.

It will be similar to The RoomStore World that opened in Houston last fall.

Golden jubilee

Fifty years ago this Sunday, S. Buford Scott started working at Scott & Stringfellow Inc., the Richmond-based brokerage that his grandfather started.

The brokerage is holding a celebration tomorrow night for Scott, who has been the firm's chairman since 1974.

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