

# ■ Making Dough is Good for Business

San Francisco Firm Sells Better Batter to World Markets

by Curt Cultice  
*ITA Office of Public Affairs*

Savvy businessman Ed Hernando likes the dough so much that he not only makes it but also sells it. Now, thanks to recent export successes, more and more people are cooking with his delectably delicious line of batter mixes.

“Vegetables, shrimp, soft-shelled crab, bean sprouts, and even bananas, are just waiting to be smothered in my batter mix,” Hernando says. “Go ahead, just try it, you’ll be glad you did.” Hernando Fine Foods’ seafood and vegetable batter mix, that is. “Yes, go ahead and treat yourself to the exceptional taste that will awaken your taste buds,” says Hernando’s literature.

More and more people are taking Hernando’s advice. Just mix batter with tap water, ice water, or beer, but don’t add egg, seasoning, or spices. Then dip and fry. The unique tempura-style batter “seals in” the food’s flavor, so several different foods in one dish can be battered—but each will retain its original flavor. One package of batter mix will coat about a pound of seafood, as one happy customer wrote: “The shrimp was fabulous and your batter made them perfect. I also

made some excellent Chile Rellenos and Cauliflower a la Sandia.”

As CEO of Hernando Fine Foods, a small firm in San Francisco, Ed Hernando has always had a penchant for food and cooking. “I was always pretty handy in the kitchen, cooking up different recipes,” he says. “I would cook up battered goodies for my family and friends, and it kind of grew from there.”

## ■ HAVE MIX, WILL TRAVEL

Well, one thing led to another, and he soon established his own family business in 1993.

Hernando Fine Foods had done well in the United States, but had never exported until three years ago it tapped the services of the U.S. Export Assistance Center in San Francisco and the Center for International Trade Development in San Mateo.



Ed Hernando (right), owner and founder of Hernando Fine Foods, and Stephen Johnson of the San Francisco Export Assistance Center show off Hernando’s batter mixes.

Photo courtesy of U.S. Commercial Service, San Francisco.

“We encouraged the company to participate in the U.S. Commerce Department’s Global Diversity Initiative, which teaches minority-owned firms the basics of exporting,” says Stephen Johnson, a trade specialist with the U.S. Export Assistance Center. “Mr. Hernando really took advantage of the GDI program to break new ground in exporting.”

Soon thereafter, Hernando participated in the San Francisco GDI trade delegation to São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in November 2002. In São Paulo, the firm utilized the department’s Gold Key Service, which schedules customized appointments with potential business partners. As a result, Hernando Fine Foods is negotiating an agreement with Serra Morena, located in São Paulo, to distribute its products throughout Brazil.

Hernando also participated in the GDI trade mission to Guadalajara, Mexico, in May 2000. He is also negotiating an agreement with C.F. Import and Export, Inc., located in Guadalajara, to distribute its products in Mexico. The mission was partly organized by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

“The Global Diversity Initiative enabled me to get my batter mixes into foreign markets,” Hernando says. “In only several months, I’ve been able to obtain distributors in Brazil and Mexico, thanks to the San Francisco GDI program.”

Right now, Hernando blends his ingredients himself at a packaging company, but the growth of his company and its export potential will soon turn a dream into reality: Ed expects to have his own manufacturing facilities by next year.

That means more mixing, dipping, frying, and sampling at dinner tables the world over.

“People in the Bay area already purchase my batter mixes and send them

to relatives around the world,” he says. “Right now, I’m selling my mixes on my Web site and through distributors, but we’ll soon be marketing to specialty stores, the military, and supermarkets.” A six pack of the four-ounce mix sells for about \$10.

But not so fast. It’s one thing to please a palate in Brazil or Mexico, but what about all the other countries Hernando is thinking of selling to—people have different tastes, right?

“Sure, but I’ve done a lot of food-tasting research, and I have found almost universal appeal for my batter mixes,” he says. “So far, the only thing I did was change the outside of my packaging to Portuguese and Spanish languages.”

Yes, but what about cooking at home with Hernando’s family. Is it “batter up” every night?

“In the beginning, I ate it every night, but now we usually use it for special gatherings,” he says. “Um, those bananas were really delicious, think I’ll have another....” ■

## Global Diversity Initiative

The U.S. Commercial Service promotes the export of goods and services from the United States, particularly by small and medium-sized businesses, through its network of 1,800 international trade professionals in the United States and in more than 70 countries.

The Global Diversity Initiative works at both the national and local levels to identify minority-owned firms that are ready to export.

The Global Diversity Initiative has three components: 1) developing, organizing, and recruiting minority-owned companies to attend trade missions and shows abroad; 2) providing aggressive outreach at minority-focused conferences and forums to inform minority-owned companies of GDI services; and 3) encouraging trade specialists to more aggressively recruit minority-owned companies as clients.

In the past year, the Commercial Service has organized two successful trade missions targeted for minority enterprises. These trade missions took several minority-owned companies to Botswana, South Africa, Italy, and Spain. These efforts helped companies identify potential partners as well as test new markets for their products.

Trade specialists working with the GDI continue to locate new clients by aggressively collaborating with national minority organizations. By working with these organizations, the Commercial Service increases its visibility within a targeted business environment and simultaneously identifies qualified minority-owned enterprises to become clients.

To learn more about joining the Global Diversity Initiative in your area, contact your local Export Assistance Center, a list of which is on the back cover of this magazine, or visit [www.buyusa.gov](http://www.buyusa.gov).