



FROM RESTAURANT TO HOME KITCHEN

FIRST RESEARCHERS HELP LOCAL RESTAURANT BREAK INTO A NEW, LUCRATIVE MARKET: THE READY-TO-EAT FROZEN FOOD AISLE.

FOOD & RECIPE DEVELOPMENT

PROJECT ESSENTIALS

Principal Investigator:
Winnie Chiu; Moira Cockburn

Co-investigators:
Candace Rambert,
Martial Ribreau

Years Active: 2014

Campus: St. James/FIRSt

Support from:

Natural Science and
Engineering Research
Council (NSERC)

Industry Partners:

Scaccia Restaurant

Scaccia is a family owned and operated Italian restaurant located in downtown Toronto, in operation since 1988. Giorgio and Franca Saturnino, the owners of Scaccia, have a two-pronged approach to their business, running a fast food take-out restaurant and a licensed dining room simultaneously, serving foods created from traditional Sicilian family recipes. Their signature dish is the “scaccia” itself – a variety of delicious, healthy vegetable, cheese, and meat combinations placed between two layers of dough and baked to perfection.

Looking to break into the readymade market, Scaccia restaurant came to George Brown College’s Food Innovation and Research Studio (FIRSt) to develop a frozen microwaveable version of their scaccia sandwich product. The product had to be individually portioned for the food service industry, nutritionally responsible and as tasty as the original.

The research team, made up of FIRSt director Winnie Chiu and Food Scientist Moira Cockburn, set out to create a convenient frozen version of the restaurant quality scaccia that has become a mainstay on their menu. Scaccia has accumulated quite a few loyal customers throughout its history, making the real challenge ensuring that the dough remained soft and tasted like it just left the Scaccia kitchens.

The researchers worked very closely with Scaccia owners and head chef throughout the development process for four popular scaccia flavors. FIRSt team evaluated Scaccia’s restaurant ingredients and matched them with commercially viable options able to withstand freeze / thaw cycles.

In addition to sourcing special freezing technologies, the research team also developed a unique sauce system to ensure filling contents were contained within the open sided sandwich.

After 24 month, and 60 plus iterations of sauces, fillings and Italian style dough using a variety of preparation processes, Scaccia was given four robust formulations and product specifications to take to a co-manufacturer, complete with sensory evaluations.

After a further collaboration with GBC School of Business students, the product was tested on location at Scaccia Restaurant to gather customer insights for this particular value proposition, giving the company valuable consumer insights to develop the right marketing strategy for this innovative food product.

Scaccia now have everything that they need to proceed with their product—it won’t be long before you can pick it up in the freezer aisle to enjoy at home.

Learn more at gbcfirst.ca