Las Reinas—which translates from Spanish to “the queens”—is a Toronto-based start-up and Latin-inspired food products brand, which focuses on offering healthy ready-to-eat and pantry products.

Owners Beth Paz and Eloisa Bertorelli both of Venezuelan decent, founded Las Reinas after seeing a market gap for people seeking to maintain a healthy diet who do not want to sacrifice the vibrant flavors of Venezuelan cuisine.

“Our product was very artisanal—we sold at farmer’s markets in Toronto and wanted to start making bigger batches to sell to stores,” says Beth Paz, Finance and General Business Logistics Managing Partner for the company.

Their cornerstone product was the Venezuelan arepa—a traditional South American savory cake that can be eaten either stuffed like a pita, or topped with protein, cheese or vegetables. Typically, arepas are simply made from corn flour, salt and water but Las Reinas has added a very unique twist on tradition by adding vegetables.

The exclusive use of fresh vegetables and ingredients meant that the veggie arepas didn’t last more than a week in the fridge. To expand their market and better meet the needs of their customers, Las Reinas wanted to explore ways to make their product last longer.

Their idea was to use seasonal and locally sourced ingredients in a line of frozen arepas which would be designed to be toasted at home and filled with any number of healthy options. The inclusion of superfoods and seeds like flax, sunflower seeds and chia gave a delicious extra dose of healthy nutrients.

Las Reinas partnered with the Food Innovation & Research Studio (FIRSt) to develop a line of three freezer ready arepa recipes: kale/cilantro, carrot, and beet. The George Brown research team included Candace Rambert (Culinary Technician), Susan Plummer (Applied Research Food Scientist) and Kelly-Anne Kerrigan, a Student Researcher from the Culinary Management – Nutrition program.

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