

So Fruitty Frozen Fruit Bars

Fresh Flavors Shine in Locally Made Sweet Treats

THE ONLY THING THAT COUSINS Alex Frota and Cesar Frota love more than running is fueling their bodies with healthy, whole food.

"We are sports lovers," says Alex. Natives of Brazil, the two cousins run marathons, swim, play volleyball, football, soccer, basketball and tennis. "I had a coach who told me I'd never be great at any one of them, because I played them all," laughs Alex.

But as they grew up, married and had families of their own, they also grew more concerned about healthy eating and powering their workouts with whole, clean foods. That was especially true when it came to dessert. Alex always loved the idea of fruit bars as a healthy, refreshing treat. "Fruit is king in Brazil," he said, and because of warm temperatures and active lifestyles, a fruit-based treat seems natural. But finding options that weren't full of refined sugar and artificial ingredients could sometimes be challenging. That's

Find So Fruitty Frozen Fruit Bars at markets including Whole Foods, Lucky's Market, Earth Fare Seminole, Hoover's Market and Sprouts in Tampa. For a complete list of locations or to order online, visit sofruity.com.

when he discovered the bars made by Chef Renzy Bernardina Jr., or Junior, as he is affectionately known.

Alex loved Junior's fruit bars so much that he installed a freezer chest — the kind you see in stores for frozen treats — in his home, and he stocked it with 1,000 bars every month. "Our house was a very popular hangout for the neighborhood kids," he recalls.

But the cousins, Alex in particular, also had a deep love for the United States, and especially Central Florida. Having visited every year from the time he was 18, Alex decided to purchase a vacation home.

He brought his wife and children to stay for six months. Six months turned into six years, as their passion for Orlando grew. Alex began to consider ideas for a new business venture. Nearly a year of research with Cesar's assistance pointed to a product that they already loved as a hot, emerging trend: frozen fruit bars.

The two noted one thing missing from the American market: fabulous tasting bars made with only the cleanest of ingredients. As a result, they contacted their friend Junior, who set about

making the most wholesome product he could formulate. The result is a line of bars that are made with spring water, unrefined sugar and the freshest whole fruits and ingredients possible.

Coming up with the best flavors for their American customers has been a fun challenge, as they continue to test and refine offerings. They learned early on that Brazil's most popular flavor, acai, fell flat in taste tests when it was sampled solo. "We tried it here, and people didn't like it, because it's bitter," explained Cesar. "So we mixed it with berries, and it's wonderful, an explosion of flavor."

They took another gamble with avocado bars. Alex and Cesar had grown up enjoying avocado as a dessert, when their grandmother would puree whole avocado in a blender with a little sugar and milk. But they knew eating the fruit this way would be foreign to American palates.

They gave it a try, and the hunch paid off. Sales of So Fruitty's avocado bars represent the line's biggest sales growth. So Fruitty flavors include coconut, avocado, acai and mixed berries, mango, strawberry, strawberry banana, lime, kiwi, watermelon cinnamon and cacao. In addition, So Fruitty also offers two bars containing whey protein: one flavored with coconut, and the other with cinnamon.

— Brooke Fehr

Cesar Frota and Junior (Renzy) Bernardina at Whole Foods Market Philips Crossing