

The history of tabasco essay sample

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The history of Tabasco, as the basic material component of the world's most popular pepper sauce begins with Colonel Maunsell White, recognized for creating the first recorded crop of Tabasco chilli peppers in the State of Louisiana in 1849 (DeWitt & Evans, 1996). The pepper was so named since the original chilli pepper seeds were first brought in from Tabasco, Mexico (Louisiana Writer's Project, 1941, p. 487). The history of McIlhenny Co., on the other hand, stretches back more than 139 years when company founder and inventor of the remarkable pepper sauce Edmund McIlhenny started experimenting on a veritable spice-based condiment in the 1860's (Jordan, 2001). These experiments were made possible by Tabasco seeds graciously given by Colonel White to a McIlhenny family member.

The renowned family grew the Tabasco peppers and began experimenting; eventually creating a recipe that has remained virtually unchanged for more than a century. The process of creating the pepper sauce begins with mashing the Tabasco peppers and straining the juices, which is then mixed with salt and vinegar. The resulting mixture is then placed in 50-gallon oak barrel vats and allowed to age for three years (DeWitt & Evans, 1996).

According to Tabasco Foodservice, the secret to the company's success is simplicity. The recipes utilized in the manufacture of their pepper sauces involve the simplest of ingredients - the pepper itself, vinegar and Avery Island Salt (Tabasco Foodservices, 2007). Moreover, the company claims that its products are chosen the world over because it requires very little to enhance the flavor of food, attributable to a high Scoville unit count, where Scovilles are the basic measure for "hotness" (Royal Society of Chemistry, 2007).

In 1868, McIlhenny started packaging his aged mixture in some 350 used cologne bottles and began marketing the product among resellers - the humble beginnings of a product that will eventually dominate a burgeoning international market in the arena of pepper sauces. In 1870, the success of his concoction impelled Edmund McIlhenny to acquire a patent. In the years that followed, some asserted that the aforementioned Colonel White was the actual inventor of the Tabasco sauce. In actuality, Colonel White's recipe for his version of the pepper sauce involved boiling the pepper as opposed to McIlhenny's process which does not involve boiling and, more so, requires aging (Tabasco, 2007). According to the product site, questions as to the ownership of the Tabasco trademark has been exclusively retained with the McIlhenny family and was once and for all settled by the United States courts in 1898.

Through nearly a century and a half of history, the McIlhenny Company has stepped up its ability to meet the increasing demand for pepper sauces. The apparent danger for Tabasco in the 90's, however, was the increasing number of competitors both from backyard operators and powerhouse corporate brand-makers. One such example is Cholula, a pepper sauce once peddled by a Mexican family in Guadalajara, Mexico. This brand of sauce started calling the attention of executives of Jose Cuervo. The company bought out the brand in the late 80's and began building a stronger market in Mexico. By the 90's, Cholula found its way into the United States market and has been growing stronger since (Poole, 2000). According to the author, Tabasco clearly dominated with some 23. 2% of the market in 2000, while

Cholula controlled about 2. 2% but showed a remarkable year-on-year growth rate of 27. 6%.

Today, Tabasco has expanded their product line and has added four sauces based on the original recipe. The current product line includes Green, Garlic, Habanero and Chipotle pepper sauces in addition to the original line. Also, the company now offers Tabasco Foodservices as a sales and marketing device. The idea behind the latter is cross promotion, wherein potential partner food establishments utilize Tabasco for product offerings. The result is that partners are afforded the chance to leverage on an international brand name presumably bolstering sales for both Tabasco and partner. The company has also modernized and scaled operations, where the sauces are bottled in about 22 languages and distributed in 100 countries (Jordan, 2001). Traditional 50-gallon oak barrels have been likewise replaced by 1, 600-gallon oak tanks monitored constantly by computers.

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