

# The Toasted Oat

By Leah Wolf

**E**rika Boll started her new business, The Toasted Oat, in an effort to provide more options for people who avoid eating gluten. Transforming her grandmother Margaret's peanut raisin granola recipe, Boll has struck gold in the most delicious way. The origin of Boll's recipe reveals the important role family has played in the formation of her company, but it goes even deeper: She started the business as a way of doing something she loved while maintaining her family as a priority. Her family's use of healthy, unprocessed foods throughout her life made it easier for her to adapt to her gluten-free lifestyle and started her on the road to a healthier relationship to food that she wants shares with consumers through her business.

"Combinations of proteins, produce and dairy is how I was raised, and how I still eat today," Boll says. "It's how I approach all of the ingredients and recipes in The Toasted Oat varieties."

The Toasted Oat's flavors include blueberry and flax, white chocolate macadamia and cashew apricot, and were inspired by Boll's dad, her husband and her own favorite flavors. Boll is dedicated to unprocessed, nutritious ingredients, including the handmade brown sugar she makes herself, and she looks to local sources for both food and packaging when a local option exists.

In addition to the support Boll has received from her family, she's had help from Marsh Williams, founder of Shout Out Studio, who works with her to develop an online marketing plan to get the word out about her new business. Williams works with many small businesses around Columbus and loves the entrepreneurial spirit and the community that emerges from it, but he believes Boll has something extra special.

"She is a force of nature and her passion for what she is doing is unbridled," says Williams. "We believe that passion trumps everything for a small business person and those are the clients we love to work with."

Diagnosed with celiac disease and armed with a personality that craves a good challenge, Boll started researching and gauging interest in her idea for The Toasted Oat in November 2012. She began food tests and package design this past spring and started sending her products to stores in May.

"That first store launch was when I thought to myself: 'This is really happening,'" she says. "I am still surprised at how quickly everything has taken off. It is very exciting and very humbling at the same time."

Boll takes all of the demands of a small business in stride. Her passion for her product and her 15 years of experience in retail is a perfect combination.



"My time in corporate retail was essential to the skill set I have applied to launching this company," she says. "I managed the design and procurement of all visual elements in stores. It taught me how to develop a concept into an idea, and the steps necessary to take the idea through the production and distribution process."

Erika enjoys the new sense of community she gained from her transition away from retail. She gets to be on the inside of the gluten-free community, including participating in the 26th Annual Celiac Conference this year, and is grateful for the welcome she's received from the food community.

"Coming from retail, it is very different—super supportive, collaborative and inclusive," Erika says. "It has been a breath of fresh air. I have realized that everyone is willing to help if you just ask."

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Toasted Oat granola can be found at both Hills Market locations, Raisin Rack, Celebrate Local, Whole Foods Market Upper Arlington and Whole Foods Market Dublin. Learn more at [thetoastedoat.com](http://thetoastedoat.com), or visit [facebook.com/TheToastedOatLLC](https://facebook.com/TheToastedOatLLC).