

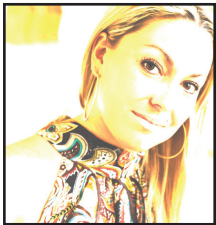
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# *Eye On* Magazine



*Changes . Ruthie Mountain Smoked Pepper . Development of Food Allergies . Mars . ...One Sock IV*





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*Randy and Katie Crumby*

## **The Power of the Pepper**

From medical doctors to scientists, from holistic nutritionists to dietitians, experts overwhelmingly agree that the foods you include in your diet play a direct and critical role in your health. In fact, "Nutrition is one of the most powerful things you can change to reverse the effects of chronic disease," says Dr. Brenda Rea, preventive medicine doctor at Loma Linda, a California-based medical center with a mission and passion for inspiring and influencing health and wellness. Because of this, the "food as medicine" movement is gaining momentum, proving through scientific research that the benefits of a healthy diet aren't just a preventative measure anymore, but a significant part of disease treatment and management being utilized in hospitals and medical centers across the globe.

A consistent chart topper on the list of superfood? PEPPERS. These tasty nutriment have been widely accepted for their health and nutrition benefits ranging from metabolic advantages to their disease prevention and digestion properties. Containing the natural plant compound known as capsaicin, peppers have quite an impressive list of do-goods for our minds and bodies. Capsaicin aids in weight loss efforts by increasing our core body temperatures resulting in a metabolic boost. Perhaps even more interesting is that this natural compound releases pain peptides that can help ease migraine pain, it is chalk full of antioxidants that pack as much of a vitamin C punch as an orange, has been known to improve skin and eye health due to its high vitamin A content, is a natural anti-microbial, actively preventing bacterial growth, and probably of the most important, are it's cancer fighting abilities. According to the Department of Nutrition and Food Science, College of Agriculture & Natural Resources at the University of Maryland, "Capsaicin has been shown to alter the expression of several genes involved in cancer cell survival, growth arrest, angiogenesis and metastasis. Recently many research groups found that capsaicin targets multiple signaling pathways, oncogenes and tumor-suppressor genes in various types of cancer models." So what is the moral of this story? Basically, EAT MORE PEPPERS!

## **Randy & Katie Crumby: the Pepper Pioneers**

Now that you know the health benefits of including peppers in your daily diet, allow me to introduce to you a pair that are taking this tried and true superfood staple and making it a healthy and delicious option for you and your family to use every day in your own personal kitchens. Randy and Katie Crumby are the





couple behind the Ruthie Mountain Smoked Pepper company (Ruthie Mountain) based in Sage, where they are growing, smoking and grinding out some of the area's tastiest varieties of peppers. A dash of their famous all-natural, hickory smoke-dried pepper in a pot of chili or beans on your stove, or a sprinkle atop chicken or veggies on your grill- if you haven't tried any Ruthie Mountain products, you should.

Magnet Cove native, Randy, always had an interest in peppers. "Growing and cooking with various peppers has always been a keen interest for Randy," Katie shares of her husband's hobby-turned-business venture. "From reaping the nutritional benefits to experimenting with different methods of preservation, it was something he was always into." His interest and experimentation turned into something a bit bigger than a gardening pastime, and with his wife's help, they started growing different varieties of peppers for local Farmer's Markets. "Interest increased for us to roast the peppers on-site with a roaster," Katie shares of the common New Mexico practice. "This evolved into a unique smoke-drying process so the pepper market could be extended beyond the growing season and the peppers could be utilized year round. Soon, requests poured in for us to grind the pepper(s) and bottle the product for easy, everyday use." And so they did.

Ruthie Mountain Smoked Pepper LLC (formerly known as Mount Olive Pepper Co) got its start in the Crumby's home kitchen, utilizing a small coffee grinder and a self-designed pepper smokehouse. After four years of efforts to develop a unique and all-natural, single ingredient product, the pair perfected the "cold smoke-dried" method of preservation using hickory wood. The smoke-dried peppers are then finely ground and packed into shaker bottles so the smoked pepper

zing can sit on anyone's spice rack year round and be added as a normal food seasoning to liven up your culinary creations with just a few shakes of the wrist.

Katie describes how they are able to capture the unique, robust and highly sought after flavor of the smoke-dried pepper for their consumers to enjoy in their personal cooking and grilling needs. "It comes from the drying process," she shares. "Utilizing a cold smoke method, the pepper has the water displaced with heated hickory smoke." And it's not a quick and simple process for this team of pepper pioneers. "The drying process takes over 100 hours of continuous hickory smoke to achieve the desired smoky result our customers love."

#### **If You Can't Stand the Heat...it's ok**

In 2014, (at that time, Mount Olive Pepper Co) Ruthie Mountain was selected as one of ten Value Added Producers by the University of Arkansas to fully develop their enterprise in a grant titled, "Fostering Enterprise Diversification to Expand Local Community Food Systems." Today, they process and bottle the pure ground hickory smoked pepper at the University of Arkansas Food Innovation Center in Fayetteville and have achieved FDA certification.

Randy and Katie are happy to offer five varieties of Arkansas grown/Arkansas made pepper, home cultivated and utilized for their pure ground/all natural product line. This includes, Jalapeño, Cayenne, Joe Parker (a New Mexico Anaheim type of medium heat), Poblano and Marconi (a sweet Italian variety). The phrase, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen", doesn't apply here. The extensive array of pepper products offered by Ruthie Mountain boasts a variety, ranging in heat and flavor intensity, suitable for anyone's pallet.



Currently you can find Ruthie Mountain products at various retailers across the region. That list includes the Kitchen Shop in Batesville, Brian's Pharmacy in Sherwood, Eggshells Kitchen Co and the Green Corner Store in Little Rock, Ozark Natural Foods community co-op in Fayetteville, Townsend Spice & Supply in Melbourne, Stone Ground Natural Foods and the Ozark Folk Center in Mountain View, Crater of Diamonds State Park in Murfreesboro and Woolly Hollow State Park in Greenbrier. If you don't live near one of these retailers, your taste buds are not out of luck. The pepper can be ordered online by visiting the Ruthie Mountain website at [www.ruthiemountain smokedpepper.com](http://www.ruthiemountain smokedpepper.com). They've also grown and evolved in their sales and distribution to include bulk sales to clients using their products as an ingredient in their own specialty rubs and sauces. Chefs are turning to Ruthie Mountain as well, getting their hands on the pepper to utilize in dishes they prepare in their restaurants. And, there's even been some competition barbecue teams seeking out their pepper to use in award-seeking rubs and specialty BBQ sauces.

From local Farmer's Markets around Mountain View to the launching pad of regional and national notability, the Ruthie Mountain Smoked Pepper is primed for take-off. With all-natural spices and seasonings being among the top 10 fastest growing markets in the United States and worldwide today, coupled with the success Ruthie Mountain has had in the local market, I think it's safe to say Ruthie Mountain Smoked Pepper could soon become a household name.

### **Home Is Where the Heart Is**

The pepper-loving couple behind Ruthie Mountain Smoked Pepper, Randy and Katie Crumby, share a true love, appreciation and respect for all things Natural State. Their company's name was inspired by the beautiful landscape of Ruthie Mountain, a geographical landmark next to the State of Arkansas Natural Heritage Area of Devil's Knob and Backbone, located in the Ozarks at Mount Olive. This is also where the family settled after relocating from the Dallas area a little over a decade ago.

Randy Crumby, of Magnet Cove, worked in the technology industry for 34+ years. His career with AT&T started in Little Rock but took him to numerous locations in the state of Arkansas and Texas before he retired in 2006. His wife, Katie, was born in Montana as one of nine children. She moved to Hot Springs, AR in 1975 after touring the state and enjoying the natural beauty of the Ouachita and Ozark Mountains. The couple first met there in Hot Springs and later married in Dallas, Texas, where they lived with their two daughters Carlene and Allison. Katie worked as a licensed real estate agent, focused on commercial real estate sales and property management in the Dallas metropolitan area.

While Dallas remained the backdrop of their lives for 20+ years, the family traveled to Arkansas at least a dozen times a year. Most of those trips were spent

exploring the Ozarks and White River in Izard and Stone counties. After Randy's retirement from AT&T, the family moved to Mount Olive, an old historic riverboat community nestled along the White River in the Arkansas Ozarks near Mountain View. Shortly after settling in, the couple started Mount Olive Outdoors, a private vacation cabin rental and trout fishing guide service, to promote White River tourism and world class trout fishing. Randy served on the Board of Directors for the Friends of the North Fork and White Rivers in 2008-09 and currently on the Board of Directors for the Arkansas Craft School located in Mountain View. Now, the pair are busy doling out their famous pepper and preparing to expand their business to the masses. We are ready to see what the future holds for Ruthie Mountain Smoked Pepper as it starts to liven up dishes and excite tastebuds across state lines. 