

'Tis the Season-ing

Local entrepreneurs hit the hot button with special blend of spices

Lauren Urban Glenn and Zack Glenn are the creators of Datilgator, which has developed quite a following on Kickstarter.

Datilgator's seasonings include Cajun, Cajun X 2 and many more flavors.



The datil pepper (left) is the main ingredient in Datilgator's line of seasonings.

It's a family affair. ... It's a spectacular success story that has just begun. ... It's an exciting journey for a local couple who believe in each other. ... It's a miraculous Kickstarter "Projects we Love" that put Datilgator in first place on Kickstarter's home page and first place on its food page within three days of introduction.

Ponte Vedra native Lauren Urban Glenn and husband Zack Glenn are the creative team who couldn't be more surprised with the meteoric excitement and acceptance of their fledgling company Datilgator. The seven-part collection of artisan seasonings was introduced only a few months ago in October 2020 after tackling mountains of research, testing and development of their magical recipes. They crafted their all-natural spices/blends for home cooks and professional chefs because people are looking at cooking and eating as an extension of their own creativity.

Zack is a dazzling scholar of how one can adapt complex culinary ingredients into a tablespoon of Datilgator, and make a simple dish into a standing ovation. He inherited his passion for cooking from his father. The original Cajun Datilgator seasoning is a tribute to his father Larry's "famous" Cajun Shrimp dish that he began making in the 1990s. Both Zack and Lauren come from two families of entrepreneurs who have injected them with the spunk and spirit of giving it "all you've got!"



TABLE TALK

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Lauren's unbounded marketing and event creativity is the perfect balance to Zack's foodie soul. The unique and vibrant artistry of their bottling and cleverly designed labels comes from her discerning attention to detail as they collaborated on the hand-crafted small artisan batches of Datilgator. The parents of two young children, Azalea and Troy, they solidly agree that their finest hours of working together happen as soon as the children go to bed.

"I think over the years our best ideas have come from moments when we've brainstormed as a team," Lauren said. "We are both pretty opinionated and while our opinions don't always match up, I think it's from those times when we are working as a team to find a solution or a game plan, that we create awesome ideas!"

Timing and destiny crept into the Glenns' life when they both found that their full-time careers — Zack a professional photographer and Lauren a full-time mother and special event producer — came to a resounding halt. This was the opportunity to give 100% of their time to figuring out how to transition into their dream of Datilgator. It was not a clear and easy path. Consider a lengthy list of certifications that required jumping through hoops from new product licensing, attorneys, permitting, finding a commercial kitchen, storage of ingredients and bottles, FDA rules, state permitting, sales tax information, Florida Department of Agriculture, studying food safety and ... ON and ON and ON!

One of the most fascinating challenges was learning how to cultivate the elusive little datil pepper, which is the primary “heat!” that would eventually take the place of Larry Glenn’s Cajun shrimp recipe’s cayenne pepper. Luckily Lauren’s father, Steve Urban, introduced them to the datil pepper — two influential fathers adding to the “family affair” that was speedily taking form. They began giving TLC to their own plants at home, experimenting with different ways to dehydrate and crush the datils (important knowledge) so that they could choose a licensed datil pepper distributor for Datilgator. The plan was to make Larry’s awesome recipe of 15-plus ingredients into just one seasoning — Datilgator Cajun!

Finally, it was time to discover how Kickstarter could really work, and wow, did it! Zack’s videos and outreach to possible backers were hot. They did their homework and the seasonings were irresistibly and alluringly presented to the immediate world. Together Lauren and Zack achieved their start-up goal in only three days! Sky-rocketing from the original goal of \$5,000, they generated more than \$20,000 of advance sales in a few days. They sold out before they delivered the first bottle and people were already asking for more and sending them photos of all the dishes they loved to create with it. It was a watershed moment for the Glenns, giving them the confirmation and confidence to move forward with the ultimate goal of bringing Datilgator to grocery stores, restaurants and consumers!

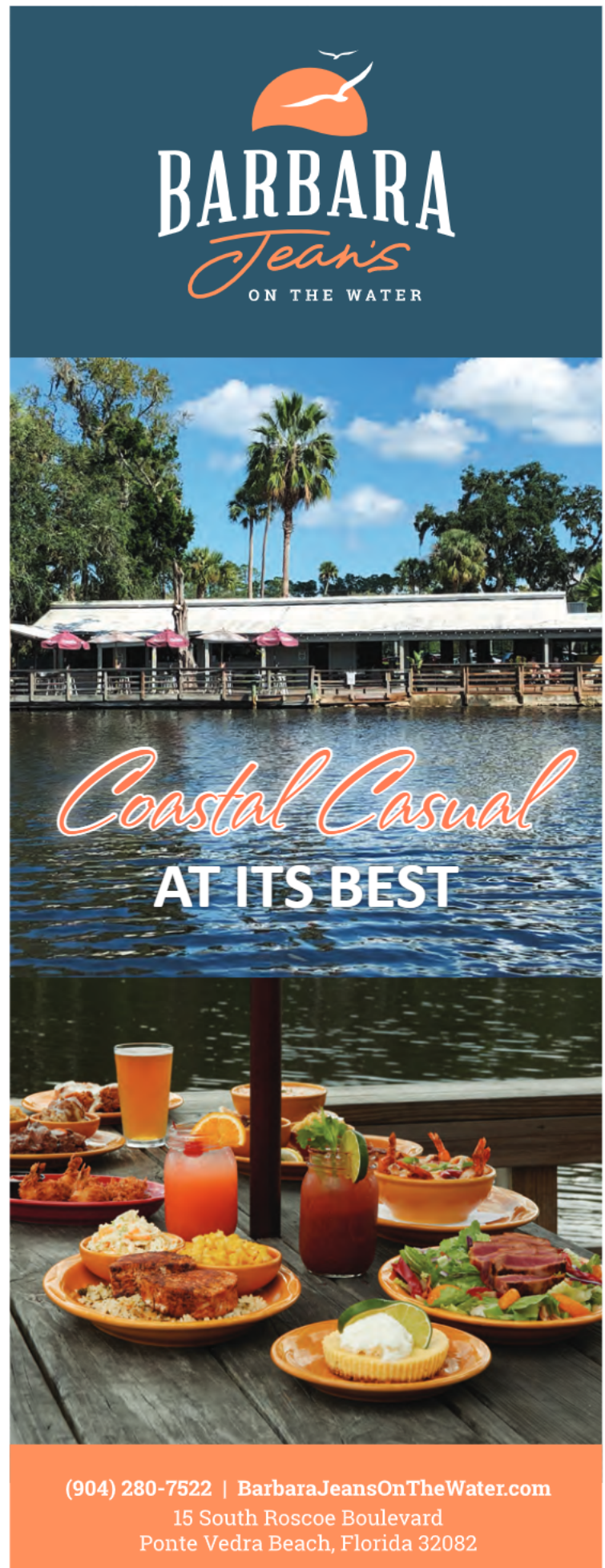
Today, working with a co-packer in Florida to meet their demand and maintain a perfect, consistent quality, the Glenns are free to continue creating an expanded line of Datilgator, doing the sales and marketing while moving into food arenas that they never dreamed of a few months ago. They laughingly recall every test they ran that meant another tasty meal for family and friends, which is what kept them on track to refining the look, taste and versatility of the incredible flavors of Datilgator, which include Original Cajun; Cajun x 2 (for the wildly hot palate); Taco Lime; Twisted Lemon; Sweet & Spicy; Best Burger; and Datil Pepper Powder.

Although it’s easy to visit Datilgator online and order your favorite flavors, Lauren and Zack encourage locals in Northeast Florida to support their brick-and-mortar retail partners too. Currently they are found in Ancient Olive in St. Augustine, Hagan Ace Hardware stores, Hoby’s Honey in Mandarin, Hot Stuff in St. Augustine and Safe Harbor Seafood in Atlantic Beach.

Lauren is happy to be back in Northeast Florida with her family and her best friend, partner and hubby Zack who grew up in Maryland. She recalls her colorful high school years at Nease when, in 2003, she was awarded “Local Hero of the Year” by the Ponte Vedra Rotary for community service. She hasn’t lost her charming sense of humor, especially since she is now Datilgator’s owner and chief excitement officer.

Zack cherishes his family relationships too, recognizing, “Datilgator is a culinary blend of two-family traditions that will bring you closer to your family and friends. Cooking should be fun, delicious and shared. Datilgator is a great place to start. We’ve done the hard work so you can keep your cooking simple. The future looks bright with more exciting blends coming to market!”

For more information, go to www.DatilGator.com.



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