



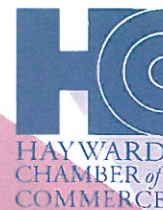
31ST
ANNUAL

HAYWARD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
BUSINESS

EXPO



2016



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 5TH, 2016
4:30 - 7:30 P.M.

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Noon-1:30 p.m.

Light lunch will be provided.



Come learn about:

- Best practices for small businesses
 - Business plan development
 - Start-up basics
 - Access to capital
 - Regulatory compliance
 - Money management
- Hiring and retaining employees

Charles F. Kennedy Community Center

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Presentations by:

Small Business Development Center

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FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO RSVP

please contact Deborah Cox at (510) 583-8818 or Deborah.Cox@asm.ca.gov

Hayward wholesaler turns to online ordering

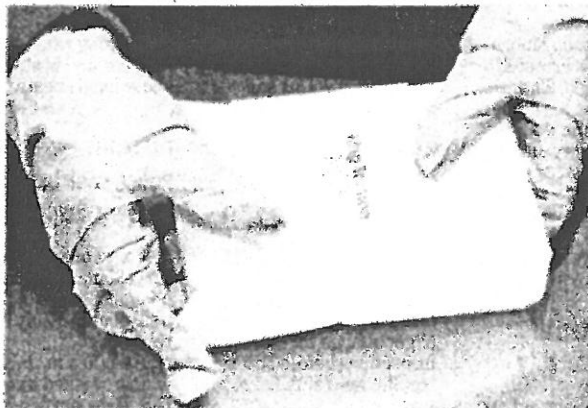


ANDA CHU/STAFF

Chris Lam, president and CEO of Pucci Foods in Hayward, recently introduced an online delivery service that will ship fresh fish directly to customers' homes from the fresh seafood, meat and specialty foods distributor. Below, Trang Duong wraps portions of king salmon while packing an order last week. The nearly century-old company already has a robust distribution system, which made the delivery service easier to implement.

Fresh fish ... delivered to your door

Nearly century-old Pucci Foods introduces direct-to-consumer service to seafood industry



By Annie Sciacca

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HAYWARD — There has not been a lot of innovation in the ancient seafood industry, but Chris Lam, owner of the nearly century-old East Bay business Pucci Foods, is trying to change that.

His latest effort is expanding the wholesale fish distributor's model to include a direct-to-consumer delivery service. While the company's seafood has traditionally been available only to restaurants and retailers, customers can now log on to its website, DailyFreshFish.com,

and order fish to be shipped directly to their house.

It's a move that lands historic Pucci Foods in the fray of food-delivery services that have garnered buzz — and a lot of venture capital — in the Bay Area and beyond. That includes ready-to-eat meal-delivery services like Munchery, restaurant food-delivery services such as DoorDash, as well as ready-to-cook boxes with recipes from companies like Sun Basket or the popular New York-based Blue Apron.

Grocery stores are also get-

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ANDA CHU/STAFF

James Duong fillets an Atlantic salmon at Pucci Foods in Hayward last week. The wholesale distributor's new direct-to-consumer online delivery service will ensure its customers receive fish that's days fresher than what's available in grocery stores, CEO Chris Lam said.

Pucci

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ting into the delivery game, and startups like Instacart have made a business of delivering people's groceries to their doorstep on demand.

But unlike those companies, Pucci Foods is not a startup. Started in 1918, the company already has an infrastructure for distributing seafood and a long list of wholesale clients. That made the expansion of the fish-delivery service relatively easy, Lam said.

Lam guarantees that his product is days fresher than what people can buy at grocery stores. The fish is packed in insulated boxes with gel cooling packs to keep it cool and gets to customers the day after they order it.

"The fish reminds us of southern Europe, where at the restaurant you go to pick out the exact fish you want and then the chef grills it over open coals," said Frank Rossi, an East Bay resident who has ordered a variety of fish, like Scottish salmon, swordfish and halibut, from the site. "In this instance, we pick out the fish together and I serve as the chef cooking it over open coals."

The rise of food-delivery services has been prompted by a demand for convenience and shaped by a desire for more transparency in the food system, experts say. Customers, particularly in the Bay Area, want to know where their food is coming from and, when possible, to eliminate the many steps between farmer or producer and their dining

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— Frank Rossi,
a frequent customer

room tables.

Jerry Gilson, the operations manager at Pucci Foods, said that in his 30 years of experience in the seafood industry, standards and expectations for sustainability and transparency have only become higher.

"People are asking for more traceability, and they want the freshest product possible," Gilson said. "Customers are smart."

Food delivery is a hard business to get into. Despite the hype, and the billions of dollars in funding, that the food tech industry has received in the past several years, many prominent, well-funded companies have shut down, such as online farmers market Farmigo or scaled back operations, such as San Francisco-based Good Eggs.

But Lam is confident in his company's proven track record of success — all 98 years of it — and he's no stranger to challenges.

Having grown up in Vietnam, Lam escaped the war-torn country at age 11 with his brother in 1980. He made his way to San Diego, where he was taken in by a family who lived there (his parents remained in Vietnam) and

worked his way to UC Riverside to study business and economics. He eventually earned an MBA from Cal State San Bernardino.

In 1993, he joined Blue River Seafood, which bought Pucci Foods, as a project manager. He bought Pucci in 2001, a month before the Sept. 11 attacks that sent the economy into turmoil, but he kept the business afloat, moving it from Jack London Square in Oakland to its current location in Hayward.

Since then, he said, he's made it a mission to combine technology with the traditions of the seafood industry. From machines that package seafood into specific portions, to technology that tracks inventory to keep the fish moving efficiently — and staying fresh — the 53,000-square-foot Pucci Foods is buzzing with technology.

The online service is the latest project, but Lam hopes to continue to add consumer-facing programs and products, including prepared foods and foods that are marinated and ready-to-cook.

When asked what his favorite part of the industry is, Lam had a hard time choosing.

"There is something romantic about the seafood industry," he said, adding that there is a certain joy in connecting fishermen and sustainable farms directly to consumers, as well as operating a business that provides a diverse workforce of 60 employees.

"Integrity is key for us," he said. "You are what you eat."

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925-943-8073.