

# Peppers Unlimited of Louisiana Inc.

## A Spicy Success Story

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George Bulliard Sr. can't imagine a meal where spicy flavorings – his metaphorical life's blood – is not discussed at length and drizzled over each course. Now in his early '70s, Bulliard has given his life to perfecting the art of pepper sauce. As the founder and president of Peppers Unlimited of Louisiana, Inc., one of Louisiana's largest seasoning producers, Bulliard is always surrounded by his life's passion, and he is constantly thinking of new ways to improve the formula.

"It's all I've ever done, hot sauce is my whole life," Bulliard reflects. "It's how I was raised; I've got it in my veins." Since 1910 Bulliard's family has been involved in hot sauce and seasoning companies – with George being the third generation of Bulliard involved in the industry – so he is well-versed in the hot and cold of the industry.

Growing up, Bulliard was taught the perfect blend of peppers for each type of hot sauce. And in 1993, after working as a consultant for several other companies, Bulliard gathered his secret recipes – most of which were simply stored in the deep corners of his brain – and started a new, now multimillion dollar company, which he plans to eventually pass to his children.

"Hot sauce is not something you can just have a formula for; it's more than a science for us," he says. "We've been doing it for so many years, I've been doing it for over 50 years myself and my kids are doing it right now."

Peppers has just under 100 employees, does more than \$30 million a year in sales, and bottles 100 million bottles of hot

sauce a year. While hot sauce and pepper are the company's main commodities, Peppers also makes chicken wing sauce, steak sauce, worcestershire sauce, marinade, BBQ, teriyaki, soy and chipotle sauce.



### The Private-Label Market

In addition to the sauces under the Peppers Unlimited label, the firm also produces seasonings for the food service sector (Topco, Food Club, Sysco, U.S. Foodservice), as well as private-label companies. In fact, the private-label sector of the company has grown exponentially over the past few years. To stay abreast with the needs of the private-label industry, Peppers is a member of the Private Label Manufacturers Association.

"Whatever they want, we can make it," says Bulliard, adding that 2010 is going to be the company's busiest year yet for private-label products. "We've picked up some big customers as we go." With three chemists on

staff always exploring new flavor profiles, Peppers Unlimited has made garlic and barbecue sauce, among other items, for its private-label contracts.

"It's very good, Peppers Unlimited has a lot of capacity; we've got five production lines running all the time, and we're building a sixth," Bulliard continues. With new equipment and packaging, Peppers' ability to produce hot sauce quickly has increased tenfold since the firm's inception in the 1990s.

"In about a week's time we do more now than we used to do in whole year," Bulliard shares. "Peppers Unlimited used to produce 1 million pounds of pepper a year, now we do 2

million pounds a month. We went from 70 bottles a minute to 300-400 bottles a minute.”

Quick production is essential to Peppers Unlimited success. Many private label contracts require product delivery sauces within two weeks, so production time can feel like a whirlwind.

### Quality is Key

Despite the fast pace, Peppers Unlimited makes sure nothing that leaves the factory is less than remarkably delicious. Peppers Unlimited has three full-time quality managers and the family is directly involved in producing the product.

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*- George Bulliard, Peppers Unlimited Founder & President*

“We’re always making sure [our products] are up to snuff with us; Peppers Unlimited wants a consistent product all the time, so we’ve got a lot of watch dogs,” Bulliard continues. “It’s a family operation and everything is watched more closely [than in larger companies]. A lot more goes into the product itself; nothing goes out of here without making sure its first class.”

Currently, the firm is working on ways to negate the rising costs of glass packaging and freight. Bulliard has been looking into international packaging companies, outside of the U.S. and Mexico, and exploring alternative transportation methods. “Freight costs have gone up about 40 percent, at least, over the past two years,” admits Bulliard. Besides shipping and bottling, Peppers Unlimited has survived the recession unscathed. In fact, the firm’s profits have continued to rise despite the credit crunch.

With its prospects untouched and production poised to increase, the future of Peppers Unlimited holds as much promise as the company’s name. But, as much as he loves hot sauce, Bulliard has been contemplating retirement for a while. As he prepares to leave his life’s work, he’s realizing that it’s harder than he thought.

“It’s time for me to take off and start doing a few things,” he starts, trailing off. “But I’m still here every day...” After a few minutes lost in his thoughts, he continues, saying without a flicker of doubt that he knows his children will continue to grow Peppers Unlimited with as much pride as he has. That way Bulliard can relax on the golf course, knowing top-quality hot sauce will always be within reach. •

Charles G. Lawson Trucking, Inc. was started in 1971 by Charles G. Lawson with one truck which he drove. While the company has enjoyed a healthy measure of growth since then, we have never stipulated that a certain percentage of growth had to be maintained from year to year. Our philosophy has always been to do what it takes to satisfy the needs of our customers.

We are dedicated to the food industry. We presently have three terminal facilities to support customer requirements. Hope Hull, Alabama serves as the location for the corporate office and the primary maintenance and repair facility. It is also the base for all refrigerated and dry van operations. Port Barre, Louisiana primarily supports the liquid bulk loads out of South Louisiana. Gainesville, Georgia serves as the primary hub for all other liquid bulk loads.

**CHARLES G. LAWSON TRUCKING, INC.**

We are proud to have been a carrier for **Peppers Unlimited of Louisiana, Inc.** for more than 20 years. Our success is due to partners like Peppers Unlimited and their commitment to their customers has made them successful as well.

Charles G. Lawson  
President

**CHARLES G. LAWSON TRUCKING, INC.**

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