

Japanese Family Brings Their Traditions to Meijer Shelves

Justin Gill's grandmother, Judy Yokoyama, played an influential role in his life growing up in Northern California. Along with sharing her wisdom, Judy's cooking brought the family together around the table. A family favorite was a Japanese barbecue sauce, which she learned how to make from her immigrant parents.

"It was always present at our family meals growing up, so it was always a part of our lives," said Justin Gill, Founder and CEO of Bachan's.

Thanks to his grandmother, the sauces are now available on Meijer shelves across the Midwest.

The family first shared the multi-generational recipe with customers of the family's landscaping business as a holiday present. "People loved it so much they came back with their empty bottles asking for more," Justin said.

Justin realized there was an opportunity to build a business around the uniquely sweet and savory recipe, so in 2013, he started thinking about how to bottle it commercially so more people could enjoy it. He knew he wanted to name it after Judy, who was lovingly called Bachan, which is a Japanese-American term of endearment for grandmother.

During his six years of figuring out how to package the recipe on a large scale, Justin found a way to bottle the sauce using a cold-fill process, so the natural flavors came through. This breakthrough allowed Justin to stay true to tradition with clean ingredients and zero preservatives. Their Original Japanese Barbecue Sauce launched in 2019.

Fast forward to 2022, when the San Francisco Bay-area business officially launched its partnership with Meijer, where you can find all five flavors: Original, Miso, Hot and Spicy, Yuzu Citrus, and Gluten-Free.

"Meijer has been a great partner as we built our presence on the shelf," Justin said. "One of the biggest things opportunities is to continue working together to drive visibility for the Bachan's brand and get noticed on the shelf.

Working closely with the Meijer Buyer and Supplier Inclusion team has helped Bachan's build an important strategic partnership over the past two years.

"To have a retailer that's gotten so behind us and supported us so well over the years, I think that's a big part of why we've been able to grow and be successful," said Janet Lee, Bachan's Vice President of Marketing. "So, there's just a lot of appreciation. We're in all Meijer stores. It's been incredible to have this California brand representing authentic Japanese flavors be embraced by people across the country."

With the ongoing success of Bachan's, Justin's family legacy remains strong and we're proud to support their mission in sharing authentic flavors with our customers across the Midwest.

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