



*Orange isn't the only
flavor available from
specialty producers
in the Sunshine State.*

By Lee J. DiVita

Florida

The Sunshine State of Florida is home to a tropical climate and flavors. Although citrus makes up a large part of the state's agriculture, specialty food producers there use a wide variety of tastes to shape their products. Photo courtesy of Visit Florida (www.visitflorida.org).

Space-Saving Spice

Phil LaMarche of Palm Harbor, Florida, just had too many jars of spices in his pantry, and he thought it was getting ridiculous.

In 1967, the electronics marketer and avid home cook started experimenting with his 100-plus collection of spices. He wanted to create a spice blend that could be used on everything. After several months of tinkering in the kitchen, the Original blend was born. Instant Gourmet Spices (800/395-7792), officially incorporated in 1982, now offers six spice blends to satisfy every taste.

"I found out very quickly that if people who didn't like to cook, or maybe weren't good cooks, used my Original blend, they truly became instant gourmet cooks. The spice itself is something you literally put on everything, and each food takes on a different taste," LaMarche says. "After 38 years, I

still go through a bottle or more of the Original every week."

LaMarche and his wife, Diane, have tried to cover the entire palette of flavors so that the customer needs little else. "These spice blends make things a lot less complicated," LaMarche says.

In addition to the Original blend, Instant Gourmet also sells the Rustic Italiano blend, a Grande Southwest blend, the Caribbean Isles blend, the Butter Blast for breads and baked potatoes, and the newest creation, Awake-A-Steak.

"I created a steak rub with French-roast coffee in it. You can pick up on the added coffee when you smell it, but when you grill with it, it gives steak a charred taste."

He's convinced once customers taste it, they'll be sold. To help with that, LaMarche includes recipes on Instant Gourmet's website, including an award-winning Texas chili using the Grande Southwest blend.

"This is our second year [selling the spices] full-time, and we grew 300 percent last year," LaMarche says. "We are having so much fun."



Help home cooks keep down the spice clutter with Instant Gourmet spice blends, which make seasoning food simple. The Original Blend works on meat, seafood and vegetables. From **Instant Gourmet**, 800/395-7792; www.instantgourmet.com or **Circle No. 200**