



Dan Berlin, left, and Joe Basta of Rodelle Vanillas assesses cooking conditions in Uganda. In honor of its 75th anniversary, the Fort Collins company is launching an energy-efficient stove project in Uganda.

Courtesy of Deb Schlichting

Company blends products with philanthropy mission

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In honor of its 75th anniversary, Custom Blending, the Fort Collins company that makes Rodelle Vanilla and other spices, is introducing a new line of organic extracts as well as launching an energy-efficient stove project in Uganda.

The company plans to debut its Rodelle Organics line at the Natural Products Expo West this weekend in Los Angeles.

The certified organic collection will include: vanilla, almond, chocolate and lemon extract along with bourbon vanilla beans.

"What better way to honor our heritage," said Joe Basta, partner with Rodelle. "We really think this will be a great extension of our Rodelle line; what we are really targeting is the natural food industry."

With the rise of such grocery stores as Whole Foods, Sunflower Market and Sprouts, Basta said the organic food movement has been the fastest-growing segment in the past five years, and this line of extracts will help the compa-

ny capitalize on that.

Currently, Rodelle has an organic vanilla extract on the market that Basta said has been popular. He attributes the organic movement to a more educated health-conscious consumer.

"I think overall, there has been a huge awareness in what we eat as the consumer gains more knowledge and information," Basta said.

Rodelle's new line is made with all organic ingredients as certified by the Colorado Department of Agriculture.

In addition to expanding its line of extracts, Rodelle launched a program last week in Uganda where it will be working with local farmers to create a sustainable stove project. The project is a partnership between Custom

Blending and the local non-profit Trees,

Water & People, based in Fort Collins, to provide Ugandan farmers with energy-efficient stoves.

About 75 percent of families in Uganda cook over open wood fires and cannot afford electric or gas stoves or access alternative fuel sources, according to Dan Berlin, partner with Rodelle Inc., who recently returned from Uganda with Basta. The open wood fires can cause deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions combined with health issues for the farmers.

In its initial phase, they still are trying to determine the best way to get the stoves to their network of 7,500 farmers.

Basta said they might charge farmers a certain amount so they would take ownership of the stove and care for it. Or, they may have the farmers help assemble their own stoves.

"This new project has inspired us to work with the local farmers and people of Uganda to lay the groundwork for a better future. If we can create a sustainable system for them, we have created an industry that will also uplift the Ugandan economy, all while changing lives," said Berlin in a prepared statement.

