



Good Enough for Grandma...

There's no debating the origin of Derby Pie, a chocolate-and-walnut concoction trademarked by its creators, Walter and Leandra Kern. The Kerns developed the pie in the mid-1950s for the Melrose Inn near Louisville, where they managed the dining room, and named their pie after the city's famous horse race. A decade later the Kerns launched a baking company, Kern's Kitchen, out of their home. "Grandma baked the pies three at a time and cooled them on her porch," recalls grandson Alan Rupp, who now runs Kern's.

Rupp vigilantly guards his forbears' recipe. Kern's Kitchen has filed 10 trademark infringement lawsuits, going up against big names such as Nestlé Foods. Rupp's six employees sign confidentiality agreements, and no one is allowed in the kitchen when the baker is combining ingredients. The effort has paid off: When Rupp came on board in 1973, Kern's Kitchen had 14 customers, nearly all of them restaurants. Today, it has more than 100 wholesale customers, a mail-order business, and annual sales of about \$750,000. Business is especially brisk in the weeks leading up to the May race, when Rupp hires temporary workers to meet demand. No matter which horse crosses the finish line first, Kern's comes out the winner.



1. The original—and only—Derby pie
2. Sorting walnuts... **3.** ...and cracking eggs
4. Rupp and a family tradition

