

High School Friends Grow Organic Ketchup Brand with Meijer

This September, National Condiment Month, we're celebrating Ketchup Please — an organic ketchup brand — and the young entrepreneurs behind it.

Co-founder, Evan Lamps had open-heart surgery, which inspired him to create healthier food options for heart patients. His friend, Jack Burns joined him in the mission.

"Traditional ketchup is 20 percent added sugar — usually high fructose corn syrup," Jack told us. "Think of a Snickers bar or a bag of Skittles in your ketchup. What's going on there?"

They spent 18 months testing 88 recipes, often bringing samples to school so their classmates could serve as informal taste testers.

"We couldn't cut corners," Jack said. "We'd line up bottles, have them try a Heinz alongside ours, and get real feedback — 'too thick,' 'too chunky.' High schoolers can be picky, so it was a good litmus test."

The final recipe is what Jack calls "tomato forward" — with organic tomatoes at the center of the flavor.

"We don't drown out the tomato with too many spices," he said. "At farmers markets and in-store demos, people tell us, 'Wait, this tastes like tomatoes.' We're bringing the tomato back to ketchup."

While Jack was studying at Northeastern University in Boston, his mom came across a flyer for a Meijer pitch event in Milwaukee. He quickly bought a last-minute flight home and presented Ketchup Please to the Meijer team.


"I barely remember anything from that pitch," he said. "But as I was walking out, one of the team told me, 'You guys are in.'"

Ketchup Please debuted in May 2024 in seven Wisconsin Meijer stores, and by April 2025, it had expanded to 67 locations.

The Original and Smooth Heat ketchups — and their new Barbeque Please sauce — are part of the Meijer in-store Local Favorites program, which gives regional products a chance to shine on end-cap displays.

Jack now runs sales, marketing, and more than 175 Milwaukee-area farmers' market events each summer. Evan leads production and recipe development.

We're proud to feature Ketchup Please in our stores and help customers discover an organic ketchup that, in Jack's words, "brings the tomato back to ketchup."

Additional assets available online:  [Photos](#) (1)

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