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[Q&A: The remarkable rise of Noosa](#)

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BELLVUE, COLO. — Just five years after debuting in the United States, Noosa Yoghurt, L.L.C. is on course to generate \$100 million in sales this year.

Named after a town in Queensland, Australia, Noosa was founded in 2009 and has introduced more than a dozen varieties of yogurt to the U.S. market. The yogurt is made with milk produced at a family-owned dairy farm in Bellvue and clover alfalfa honey from a local, family-owned producer.

"When describing Noosa to consumers, we stress that our yogurt is made with whole milk and never strained, which gives it that smooth, just-right velvety thickness," said Koel Thomae, co-founder of Noosa. "Our yogurt comes from an authentic Australian family recipe, and we infuse it with a touch of honey and use real, fresh fruit purees."

Hitting shelves now are Noosa's two newest flavors: vanilla and cranberry apple. The brand also is launching its popular pumpkin variety nationally.



One of Noosa's newest flavors is Cranberry Apple.

Last November, the company was acquired by private equity firm Advent International, who appointed two of its industry advisers to Noosa's board of directors. Bill Johnson, the former chief executive officer of Heinz, was named chairman, and Brad Alford, the former c.e.o. of Nestle USA, was tapped to provide guidance.

"The acquisition by Advent International in November of last year enables us to continue to bring our local, farm-fresh ingredients to even more Americans across the country," Ms. Thomae said. "Advent quickly aligned with our goals with the mindset to help us grow. For example, we are finishing up a multi-million dollar expansion to our current facility in Bellvue, Colo., in order to keep up with demand."

In an interview with *Food Business News*, Ms. Thomae discussed the challenges of product development and the remarkable rise of her brand in a crowded category.

***Food Business News:* What inspires product innovation at Noosa?**

**Koel Thomae:** I love trying new things and jump at the chance to taste and learn on my travels, particularly at local markets showcasing the best of that town or city's offerings. I was recently at the Aspen Food & Wine Festival and sampled chocolate with crickets infused in it, among other unusual delicacies.

We like to try a bit of everything but take great care in creating the new flavors and products that become part of the Noosa brand, making it like no other.

**Have there ever been any flavor varieties that did not work?**

**Ms. Thomae:** Trying to create new Noosa flavors is always a trial-and-error process, and we are completely dedicated to getting it just right. The process to determine new flavors at Noosa is one we do not take lightly, as this all began with my obsession with a particular yogurt I discovered and wanted to bring to the U.S. market. If it's not something I would eat, we do not move forward.



Product development can be challenging in a category as crowded as yogurt.

For us, the focus is on finding flavors that complement our delicious yogurt, and this is a challenge we welcome. We pride ourselves on getting our flavors just right and offering more complex flavor notes. For example, our strawberry rhubarb flavor offers the perfect balance of sweet and tart.

**What are the biggest challenges in product development?**

**Ms. Thomae:** Making a yogurt brand stand out in a cluttered market space, as the yogurt category in specific is always rapidly expanding, with new international flavors and varieties exploding on the scene (such as) Icelandic yogurt.

**How does Noosa stand apart from the competition?**

**Ms. Thomae:** We're constantly looking at new ingredients to incorporate into products and stay at the forefront of not only dairy and food trends in the U.S., but also flavor trends and profiles overseas to get a sense of what people are excited about.