

# on<sup>the</sup> Banks

STORIES FROM CAMPUS AND BEYOND

## Lovin' Spoonfuls

A RUTGERS FACILITY HAS SET THE RULES FOR THE SOUP NAZI SINCE 2002

**W**e know soups; soups are our friends," says Linda Gavin as she shows off the labs and the plant where the Soup Nazi of *Seinfeld* fame mass-produces his gourmet soups in 80-gallon kettles. Gavin, manager of operations at Rutgers' Food Manufacturing Technology Facility in Piscataway, says, "We showed Al how to maintain the integrity of his product in large, commercial quantities."

The Al she refers to is the irascible Al Yeganeh, immortalized in a 1995 *Seinfeld* episode as the Soup Nazi for the way he refused to sell to customers who didn't follow his rules. Before the episode, Yeganeh was already a neighborhood legend for the long lines that waited for his sumptuous lobster and crab

bisques and more than 40 other varieties. "Al prefers 'SoupMan' to that other reference," says Michael Joy, vice president of culinary services for Soup Kitchen International, Inc., the company

that took Yeganeh's soups national. "It's no coincidence that we don't use that reference. Al likes to say he made *Seinfeld* famous."

The four staffers at the facility, part of Cook College's Agricultural Experiment Station, have worked with the Soup Kitchen on viscosity, ingredient distribution, quality control, and freeze-drying techniques. The company pays Rutgers to manufacture certain soups, but the bulk of its production is done elsewhere.

Eyeballing cases of frozen jambalaya soup waiting to be shipped, Gavin points out that her team has also helped chef Wolfgang Puck mass-produce his own line of soups. But she maintains a soft spot for the SoupMan, confessing that his turkey chili soup is her favorite: "At my Shop-Rite, I always make a special trip down the soup aisle to make sure it's in stock."

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