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Filling but no fillers

Software engineer creates popular new energy bar

By MARILYN MCMAHON, NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER
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With his bachelor's degree in Russian language and literature from UCSB and career as a software engineer, Ivan Pelly doesn't seem to have the credentials to create the ivan.bar, an energy snack that has been flying off the shelves in almost 100 stores from Carpinteria to Pismo Beach since it was launched in January.

"Yes, I'm shocked and pleasantly surprised with all the positive feedback I have been getting," said Mr. Pelly, 55. "My two goals were to make a bar that tasted great and made you feel full afterward, and I have succeeded."

Ingredients, which are listed on the back of the distinctive package of white with bold red letters, include almonds, a seed blend (flax, chia, hemp seed hearts, pumpkin), gluten-free oats, dates, agave syrup, macadamia nuts, natural vanilla flavor, pink Himalayan salt and mixed tocopherols (vitamin E as antioxidant).

"There are no fillers and no preservatives," said Mr. Pelly, who was motivated to create the bar because he is a vegetarian and has hypoglycemia, a condition caused by a very low level of blood sugar (glucose), which is the body's main energy source.

"The usual snack bars weren't working for me. They were either too small, too sweet or didn't taste good. I thought I could do better, so I set out to make my own. I studied what kind of ingredients made for good nutrition and great taste and I got to work."

He experimented in the kitchen at his home in the San Roque area, where he lives with his wife, Polly Pelly, and sons Oliver, 19, and Ashton, 16.



Ivan Pelly, left, is the creator of the ivan.bar, an energy snack that has been flying off the shelves in almost 100 stores from Carpinteria to Pismo Beach since it was launched in January. His son, Oliver, helps with marketing and distribution.

KENNETH SONG/NEWS-PRESS PHOT



Among the reasons the bars are so special is that all the ingredients are actual food, provide 10 grams of protein and weigh 2.5 ounces. Each bar has 340 calories.

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"Initially, I made them for myself and my family. I passed them out when my kids played baseball. The games can take a long time, especially when there are doubleheaders, and people get hungry. Soon, I was answering questions like, 'Could you make me some more?' and 'Where can I buy them?' " Mr. Pelly said.

The demand made him think that "maybe the ivan.bar could find a life outside my fridge and my kids' lunchboxes. I found a company in Los Angeles that could make them in larger quantities and began selling them commercially at Blenders in the Grass stores in Santa Barbara. Soon, other shops asked if they could sell them too."



Individual bars cost between \$2.50 and \$4 depending on the retailer, and boxes of 16 can be ordered online (www.ivan.bar) for \$39 and delivered free in Santa Barbara, Goleta and Montecito.

Among the reasons the bars are so special is that all the ingredients are actual food, provide 10 grams of protein and weigh 2.5 ounces. Each bar has 340 calories.

"Other bars weigh in at 1.4 ounces or less and use preservatives like BHT, which stabilizes fats and helps retain food smell. Macadamia nuts are loaded with healthy monounsaturated fatty acids and a good source of fiber, vitamin B6, calcium, copper, iron, magnesium, manganese, potassium, selenium and zinc. Almonds are a source of vitamin E, copper, magnesium and a high-quality protein. Chia seeds are loaded with antioxidants and contain significant protein and fiber, and hemp seeds, which are technically a nut, are exceptionally rich in two essential fatty acids —linoleic acid (omega-6) and alpha-linolenic acid (omega-3).

"Pumpkin seeds contain antioxidants like carotenoids and vitamin E, and Medjool dates have anti-inflammatory properties and contain significant quantities of fiber, protein, potassium, magnesium, copper, manganese, iron and vitamin B6."

Individual bars cost between \$2.50 and \$4 depending on the retailer, and boxes of 16 can be ordered online (www.ivan.bar) for \$39 and delivered free in Santa Barbara, Goleta and Montecito, according to Mr. Pelly, who was born in Bath, England, and lived in Pittsburgh, Pa., until the age of 8 when his family moved back to England to live in a suburb of London.

"My father was an electrical engineer, and the moves were because of his profession. When I was 16, we came back to the United States to live in Palos Verdes, where I graduated from Palos Verdes High School in 1986," said Mr. Pelly, a software engineer at Tecolote Research in Goleta.

His wife teaches a high school program for the developmentally disabled at Santa Barbara City College, and Oliver is a sophomore at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, and Ashton is a junior at Bishop Garcia Diego High School in Santa Barbara.

"Although most of the ivan.bar production is done in Los Angeles, this is very much a family business," said Mr. Pelly. "My sons help with marketing and distribution, and my wife helps with outreach and is an evangelist for the product. Currently, the ivan.bar is sold in only the original flavor, but we're planning to develop some new flavors soon."

He points out that the bar travels well and he encourages website users to send photos of themselves in iconic locations around the world to worldpics@ivan.bar. Pins of these locations are placed on the website map.

"If we use your photos on the website, we'll send you a box of bars —free! So far, we have had responses from Arran at Mount Everest, Nepal; Bree in Cascata delle Marmore, Italy; Alexander in Taos, N.M.; and George, Art, Amy and Clara in Laugavegur, Iceland."

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FYI

For more information about the ivan.bar and a list of places where it is sold, visit www.ivan.bar.