

# NYC couple banking on bugs to be big business

**An area** couple has left the corporate world behind to launch an all-natural insect repellent that is getting a lot of attention.

BY JASON SCHAFFER

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COQUINA BEACH - Anna Maria Island is home to countless species of palm trees, tropical plants, rare birds, marine life and white sand beaches, but if you've spent even a few hours on the Island, you know it's also home to plenty of insects that love to bite and sting.

No-see-ums, mosquitoes, biting flies, ticks, hornets and fire ants are a part of life here, but thanks to a New York couple with a formula and a dream, dealing with them may have gotten a bit less painful.

The company is Emma Beans Natural Solutions, and how it came to be is a study in perseverance and innovation.

"I was a VP for a pharmaceutical company in New York City and my wife worked for a medical office," said Dean Miller, who along with his wife, Jeanette, founded Emma Beans.

"My wife's family is from Puerto Rico,

and her great aunt passed away," Miller said. "While in Puerto Rico helping clean out her aunt's house, she came across a notebook full of recipes."

Dean said that upon returning to the U.S. and looking more closely, Jeanette discovered a recipe for mosquito repellent and one for pain relief in her great aunt's notebook.

The great aunt had lived in the town of Cuamo, Puerto Rico, which is in a rural mountainous region where people tend to take care of their needs by creating a self-sustainable existence living off the land.

"My wife said her aunt would walk out the back door of her small wooden house, always barefoot, and take a machete and just chop herbs. She would bring them in the house and grind them into an oil she would use on my wife when she got bit by mosquitoes," Dean said, recounting the memories that made his wife want to do something with these formulas after finding the recipes.

Being an executive in the pharmaceutical industry, Miller had the means and business connections with people who could take his wife's idea and set the wheels in motion to bring the product to market. After working on the formulas, the Millers began testing their insect repellent on Long Island and in



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Emma Beans owners, Dean and Jeanette Miller, at the Coquina Beach Market.

northern New Jersey, both of which have more than enough bugs for a proper evaluation of effectiveness.

While creating what would be the formula for Emma Beans "Pesky Bug Stay Away Spray and Hydrating Lotion," it was important for the Millers to keep it all-natural and good for the skin. The couple also wanted a product that worked on multiple species and smelled good.

While many companies go to great

lengths to protect their "secret sauce," the Millers are more than willing to share what makes their natural, Deet-free product safe and effective.

"It contains the most clinically proven, all-natural insect repelling ingredients on the market; well over a dozen ingredients. Things like citronella, lemongrass, cedarwood, patchouli, linseed and even catnip make up the ingredients. The list goes on and on of these proven natural repellents," Dean Miller said.

After perfecting the formula, Dean began hitting the pavement in New York and New Jersey, just walking into bait and tackle shops, corner stores, and anywhere he could get to put the product on their shelves, while still working his VP job in Manhattan. The results were impressive, selling out and getting re-orders from just about every store.

By late 2019, the Millers were ready to take Emma Beans to the big box stores.

Then came COVID-19, which changed everything.

"When March came, my company, which was in New York City, was under a mother company in Thailand," Dean said, referring to the pharmaceutical firm where he was a VP.

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