

# Spread the Curd

*A Pawley's Island company makes real-deal pimento cheese readily available at the local grocer*

It all started in a parking lot. "My wife, Sassy, is from Atlanta," Palmetto Cheese cofounder **Brian Henry** explains, "where we spent a lot of time tailgating at **Braves games.**" Sassy's home run hit: her **pimento cheese** recipe. After moving to **Pawley's Island**, where they run a bed-and-breakfast, the Henrys found **Sassy's recipe** much in demand for parties. It occurred to them: if folks like it that much, why not package and sell it?

The couple's family friend and cook, **Vertrella Brown**, modified the recipe slightly, adding a few spices that lent the pimento cheese its "**soulful touch,**" as Brian describes it. Today, two versions grace local shelves—Original is "**just like it should be,**" the label proclaims, while **Jalapeño** provides a hint of

**"smooth burn."**

The crew closely guards the collaborative recipes, but Brian points out two key ingredients that distinguish Palmetto Cheese from most packaged spreads: **real**—not processed—sharp cheddar and high-quality mayonnaise. "It costs a little more," Brian says, "but it's a premium product—an authentic Southern recipe that folks are willing to pay for."

George Easterling, who has since taken over the kitchen, mixes around **50 batches** of Palmetto Cheese by hand each week to fill about **30 12-ounce** tubs. All that **stirring** would be a muscle-straining job were it not for the strong arm George developed over years of boxing. "The secret is in **consistency,**" says George. "You have to get the **ingredients** just right, and you



*Like all pimento cheese, Palmetto Cheese is astoundingly versatile—from topping finger foods to filling sandwiches. You might even try it on a steak.*



*Only two years after first hitting the shelves of local grocers, Palmetto Cheese is steadily spreading throughout the Lowcountry.*

have to be careful not to stir it too much—I take my time."

Launched in **April 2006**, Palmetto Cheese was originally available only at Independent Seafood in Georgetown, but now it's quickly making its way south down Highway 17 at grocers such as **Food Lion, Publix, and Piggly**

**Wiggly.** To date, Palmetto Cheese has expanded only as far as **Sewee Outpost** in Awendaw, but keep an eye out on the shelf at your nearest Charleston-area Publix, where it's slated to appear sometime this month. One caveat, though: prepare for instant addiction. —**Bryan Hunter**