

Sweet News, Local Angle

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While we were interviewing Rock Creek executive chef Frederic Przyborowski for this story and recipes, he touted the qualities of a sugar substitute called Whey Low, which is used in his restaurant's desserts.

As it happens, Whey Low has been made in nearby Ashton since 2001 and was created by Brookeville resident Lee R. Zehner. The scientist was inspired to build a better sugar substitute by his wife, Susan, who is diabetic and loves to bake.

Zehner came up with what he thinks is a proper alternative, with one net gram of carbs, five calories per teaspoon and a relatively low glycemic index. He called it Whey Low because its main sugar is derived from a cheese byproduct, but Zehner hopes the name conjures images of fewer calories as well.

"The basic formula is all-natural: a blend of lactose, fructose and sucrose," Zehner says. He perfected the balance and filed for a patent all within a few months' time. Now his family-owned business, VivaLac Inc., produces about 200,000 pounds of Whey Low annually at a facility in Ashton. The sugar substitute is sold mostly through the company's Web site and also in health food stores nationwide.

Roots in Clarksville is the only Washington area retailer that now sells Whey Low products, but Zehner says he's looking to "step up the Whey Low profile." In the next few months, he plans to meet with representatives from Whole Foods Market, Wegmans and Trader Joe's.

Chef Przyborowski is ready to provide testimonials. "It's a little more powdery than sugar but tastes just like sugar, and you can use it one-for-one in recipes," he says. "We love using it."

The Whey Low product line includes a confectioners' sugar substitute and a brown sugar substitute that the Zehners say is great in chocolate chip cookies.

A 1-pound bag is \$6.99; for more information, go to <http://www.wheylow.com/>.

-- **Bonnie S. Benwick**

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