

Agency for Change Podcast: Walter Nimocks, COO and Co-Founder, Just Made

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Walter Nimocks:

Take the leap. It's never too late to pursue your dreams.

Announcer:

Welcome to Agency for Change, a podcast from KidGlov that brings you the stories of changemakers who are actively working to improve our communities. In every episode, we'll meet with people who are making a lasting impact in the places we call home.

Lyn Wineman:

You've probably seen the term cold pressed on bottles of juice at the grocery store, but what does that actually mean? Well, unlike typical juicing, which involves blending ingredients to extract the juice, then heating it to kill harmful bacteria, cold pressed juices made from applying thousands of pounds of pressure via hydraulic press. Afterward, the juice is processed using cold water and high pressure rather than heat, which kills any pathogens and extends its shelf life.

So, fans of cold pressed juice maintain that these juices taste better and that they're more nutritious than juices made via traditional methods, and they're voting with their wallets. Market research company, Technovia, predicts that cold pressed juice will grow to a \$11.67 billion market by 2025 with 50% of that growth occurring just in the United States. Cold pressed juice is clearly having a movement, and who better to help explain this trend than the founder of a growing cold press juice company.

Stick with us as we find out how this organization got its start and why they decided to become a Certified B Corporation and how they're giving back with every single bottle they sell. Hey everyone, this is Lyn Wineman, president and chief strategist at KidGlov. Welcome to another episode of the Agency for Change podcast. Today's guest is Walter Nimocks, COO and founder of Just Made, which produces premium cold pressed juices using differentiated ingredients and functional plants and herbs. Walter, I'm eager to talk with you today. Welcome to the podcast.

Walter Nimocks:

Thanks Lyn. It's great to be here.

Lyn Wineman:

Aah, I am looking forward to talking to you. I am already thirsty for some of your cold pressed juice, but for those who aren't familiar with the company, can you introduce us to Just Made?

Walter Nimocks:

Absolutely. Oh, Just Made is a premium cold pressed juice brand that my wife and I started way back in 2016. Seems like a lifetime ago.

Lyn Wineman:

We've all been through a lot since 2016, for sure.

Walter Nimocks:

We sure have. We sure have. We started off with four SKUs that we launched in 2017. The original idea for the brand was to focus on tropical juices, and my wife is from Ecuador, and I lived in South America with her and also before meeting and marrying her. And so, I always believed that there was a real opportunity for introducing tropical fruits, tropical juices, the whole juicing culture that you see in South America and Central America. And so that was the original concept for Just Made. As the business has grown and developed, we've seen that there's really a much bigger opportunity focusing on the premium segment of the market, and that's where we've really tried to position the brand since then.

Lyn Wineman:

That makes a lot of sense. You mentioned tropical juices, I'm thinking mango and pineapple, are those some of the flavors you use? You don't use flavors you use fruit; you use real fruit.

Walter Nimocks:

We the fruit, absolutely. We certainly use mango. We use a lot of pineapple. In fact, interesting thing about our pineapple, we don't use the yellow pineapple that's really common that you see here in the U.S. We use a white pineapple, which is the yellow pineapple in the industry, so to speak, is known as an MD2, and it's the variety that was developed by Del Monte back in the 70s. It's very yellow. Very, very sweet. Almost has a coconut essence to it.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Walter Nimocks:

The white pineapple is more of, I guess the term might be an heirloom pineapple. It has a really nice balance between the tangy and the sweet, and so we feel like it gives a more authentic flavor. It doesn't load the juice up with a bunch of sugar unnecessarily, and I think it just gives a better flavor to the juice. So, we use a white pineapple.

We use pink guava from Ecuador-

Lyn Wineman:

Oh, wow.

Walter Nimocks:

Which is one of my favorite fruits. Of course, we use mango. Up until very recently we used papaya. In fact, we're probably going to introduce another papaya item. Papaya's great for gut health. It's got an enzyme in it called papain, which is fantastic for gut health. It's good for a digestion and everything. We've used pomegranate is... I don't know, borderline. It's grown in the tropics in some places, but it's also grown in California and others. What else? My goodness. There are just so many tropical fruits that are available and one of the things I fell in love within South America was the incredible variety of tropical fruits. Like tamarind is one that I feel like is unexplored.

Lyn Wineman:

Something you don't really see or hear about much in the U.S., right? A tamarind. What is a tamarind?

Walter Nimocks:

A tamarind comes from, it's an enormous tree. It's a leaf that grows on a stem, and it's a very small leaf. Anyway, I'm drawing a blank on prescribing the leaf and there's another type of tree. But anyway, it's a really large tree and it grows in a light brown seed pod, and you crack it open and inside of there, there's the tamarind fruit, which is a paste that surrounds these seeds that are like pumpkin seeds. They're white, a little bit larger than a pumpkin seed but they're white. There are just dozens of fruits that we could go on about that. Naranjilla, the same fruit, but called different things in different countries. There's lucuma which comes from Peru, there's taxo which comes from Columbia. Just incredible variety that people make juice and they're part of daily life and in Latin America.

Lyn Wineman:

I feel like I have learned so much just in the first few minutes here, and I obviously can tell that you have a lot of passion for the work. So that leads me to wonder about your founder's story. How did you come about with your wife starting Just Made?

Walter Nimocks:

Well, it goes back a few years. We met when I was working in Ecuador, and we actually had the idea of starting a juice company way back in the late 90s.

Lyn Wineman:

Oh, that's a long time ago.

Walter Nimocks:

It is a very long time ago. This has been a long time in the making. I actually developed a brand and did some initial artwork and things like that, thinking that there was a real opportunity for tropical fruits and tropical juices in North America. Because I would come up here in the late 90s and early 2000s, and I wouldn't see any real variety. I saw orange juice; I saw a grape fruit juice. I saw apple juice, and that was about it.

Lyn Wineman:

Sometimes we get crazy and mix a little pineapple into that orange, right? That'd be crazy.

Walter Nimocks:

Yes. And so we started developing this idea, and we had a young family at the time, and I needed to put food on the table, and so I didn't start the business then. Around 2002 is when I first started learning more about high pressure processing. There's a retailer here in Texas called HEB that I had noticed that they had a brand that they had launched called Fresher Lasting, and they had guacamole, they had avocado halves that were processed using high pressure processing. They had pico de gallo, they had mango halves and a couple of other items.

And I thought, wow, that there might be some application for juice there. And then at the time, there was only a pouch. It was a crease on type pouch that you could... And I thought, well, that wouldn't work. That wouldn't be the ideal packaging. Then along about 2011 or 2012 is when Suja launched, also

noticed that they were using high pressure processing, and that's when the idea struck me again. I continued working in food, have worked in food all of my life, and left my last company in 2016, and we started studying the market and at that time decided that it was a good time to launch Just Made, and that's what we did. And that's where we started off, like I said, launching the tropical juices. But since then, we've evolved the brand into more premium juices that use tropical fruits, but we also use other types of fruits and vegetables as well.

Lyn Wineman:

That's a great story. I appreciate that too, because as an entrepreneur myself, you have to balance the risk of starting out with the need to take care of your family. So I appreciate that as well. And in a way, maybe it worked out really great for you because it gave you the chance to learn about the cold pressed side of the business. So, I have heard that one of the taglines you use is made justly.

Walter Nimocks:

Yes.

Lyn Wineman:

And I'm really curious to hear that side of your story as well.

Walter Nimocks:

Absolutely. Well, the name Just Made has a double meaning. Of course, it's just made, made justly.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Walter Nimocks:

And we knew that we wanted to start a brand that had a purpose and that had a mission behind it. And I studied economics, and I consider myself an armchair economist, I guess you could say.

Lyn Wineman:

I don't hear that from very many people. There are not very many people that choose economics as a hobby.

Walter Nimocks:

And I'm particularly interested in economics when it comes to international development. And having lived outside of the U.S. and now of course living here, I've always been deeply interested in what it is that makes some countries flourish and others don't. And I've always had this question, this burning desire to understand why. But anyway, just trying to develop a brand that would contribute to development in some of these countries. And I listened to and read about a lot of different ways or economic theories around development. And one of the things that comes through a lot of times is that investments in infrastructure are usually the best sorts of investments for a developing economy to make it to the next rung on the ladder or two or three rungs up on the ladder. And that of course, helps people, helps their livelihoods, helps them to grow and develop and flourish as a society. We knew that we weren't going to generate enough money to build bridges or to put highways or massive infrastructure and that thing.

Lyn Wineman:

Not yet anyway.

Walter Nimocks:

Not yet. No. So my wife is an educator. She taught in the classroom for about 15 years, both in the U.S. and also in South America. We've raised our children, always trying to make education a priority in their lives. And so, we've settled on education as a good way to be able to give back in a meaningful way, in a way that we felt like would pay dividends in the future for the people that get the money and or get the benefit of it. And so, we developed something that's called five cents per teachers.

Lyn Wineman:

Oh. What's that?

Walter Nimocks:

And so, it's for every bottle that we sell, we give back five cents to support education in rural Latin America. And that's where we get most of our raw ingredients from. So, it has a double benefit for us as a business. One, it gives a purpose why we wanted to run a business and do this. But it also helps when people are perhaps trying to make decisions on who they're going to supply a mango with when it's a short crop, let's say. Or whatever can happen in the supply chain, maybe they will give us a little bit of a nod because they know that we're giving back to a school that their child attends to and that we're trying to help them. And perhaps, in some small way, they'll help us as well. So there's a benefit to us as well by doing that.

Lyn Wineman:

Walter, I love what you're doing with the five cents for teachers. And I have a lot of people ask me, because KidGlov is also a purpose focused business. I have people ask me, does that get in the way of being a successful business and are you being too soft and are you losing your focus? And what you just said there I think is important. You didn't choose to have the five cents for teachers program or to be a purpose driven business because you wanted it to help you in the business way. But I think it does help. I think that businesses and individuals who are doing good, people see that, customers see that. We are seeing more and more research about how consumers want to vote for brands that are doing good by spending their money. Suppliers want to do the same. Governments in some cases want to do the same. So I really think that's fantastic what you're doing. And I'm curious, what kind of impact have you been able to have over the years? Are there any examples of projects or people that are particularly memorable for you?

Walter Nimocks:

Well, it's a great question. We've had the ability to be able to help schools in Mexico and in Nicaragua and Ecuador and very soon in Brazil. So that's where we source a lot of ingredients from. I'd like to one day hopefully, work with some schools in Peru where we also get some ingredients from. But I'll tell you a quick story about the very first school that we approached. It was in Mexico, in the state of San Luis Potosi in a community outside of the capital, probably about, I don't know, 20 miles outside of the capital. And it was our prickly pear supplier that had introduced us to this school. Is totally supported by the community. It's not like in the U.S. where we have public schools that are funded by local governments and property taxes and all this kind of stuff, which has got its own problems. But it's just supported by the community.

Lyn Wineman:

Wow. That's a lot of money for community to pull together for education.

Walter Nimocks:

Well, it is, but there's not a whole lot of money there. They've got buildings and they've got teachers that might have graduated from a local university. But one of the things the director told me is that they have a really hard time keeping teachers because they get so frustrated. They come out of school and they think, I want to really help these rural communities. They last about a year or maybe two years and then they leave because there are no resources and there's no way to really help the kids. And so we went to the school and I fully expected the director to tell me, "Well, we need some books and we need some pencils and we need different learning materials and maybe an overhead projector," or something like that. But what she told me was, "We need functioning bathrooms."

Lyn Wineman:

Whoa. Wow.

Walter Nimocks:

And she said, "Do you know how hard it is to tell a third grader to just hold it?"

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah. That totally disrupts them. It disrupts their classroom. It creates a situation where they don't want to return. Oh, my goodness.

Walter Nimocks:

Exactly.

Lyn Wineman:

The things we take for granted.

Walter Nimocks:

Exactly. Exactly. And so, we spent what I think was a pretty modest amount of money. We brought some running water to the school; we fixed the bathrooms. We have the girls' and a boys' bathroom.

Lyn Wineman:

Fantastic.

Walter Nimocks:

And there was a little bit of money left over. So, we repaired broken windows, we repaired some light fixtures, and that was how we were able to start a relationship with the school. And since then, it's gone on and we've been able to help in other ways too. But there's two things I'd like to say, is one, we try to use the money in the most impactful way for that particular school, rather than saying, "We're just going to buy books." Well, they didn't need books. They don't need books.

Lyn Wineman:

You were present. You were present. You really wanted to help. And you asked. Right? It wasn't about you. It was 100% about what they needed.

Walter Nimocks:

Yeah. Yeah. It was really an eye opener for me in how important it is to understand their needs rather than try to impose something from outside.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah. Wow. What a great story, Walter. I've talked with a number of companies that are Certified B Corps, founders of those companies like you and Just Made, and for those of you who are listening that haven't heard about B Labs and Certified B Corps, it's a global network of companies who have met very rigorous guidelines, standards for how we have the highest social and environmental performance is probably the easiest way to say it. But I'm curious, Walter, what did becoming a B Corp mean to Just Made and to you?

Walter Nimocks:

Well, I first learned of B Corp through a supplier, and once I heard just the five-minute description of it, I knew that that was something that we wanted to join. And I was familiar with Fair Trade, and it worked with Fair Trade and coffee pretty closely. Had worked with Fair Trade bananas pretty closely and also had worked with Fair Trade sugar and honey and agave and products like that. So, it's a very different type of program. B Corp really struck a nerve with me because it was, to me... I'm sure there are others that are better versed in B Corp that might disagree. But I feel like it's really using business as a force for good, for sure.

Lyn Wineman:

For sure. Yeah.

Walter Nimocks:

And it's taking everything up a notch. And it's not just about paying your suppliers a fair price, but it's also how you work with your suppliers, how you treat your suppliers, how you partner with them. It's also about being a good steward of the environment. And it's also about being a good leader of a company and treating your employees fairly and going above and beyond with your employees. And all of that resonated with me. Once we started the certification process. It's pretty rigorous.

Lyn Wineman:

It's very rigorous. I have been on the record many times saying, it's hard, but it's worth it. It's worth it. I'm sure you agree.

Walter Nimocks:

Absolutely. It's worth it. And it's not easy. It's not. The first few times you'd do an online questionnaire, it's like, "Wow, we've got some gaps."

Lyn Wineman:

Right? You'd think. You're like, "We're doing good things." And then they ask you the questions that you're like, "I've never thought about that question before. I've never thought about..." But it causes you to think about it. It forces you to think about it.

Walter Nimocks:

Definitely. And to be perfectly honest, one of those things where we can improve and where B Corp is really pushing us is to become carbon neutral, or at least understand our carbon footprint well enough to be able to say, "Okay, we can get there by 2025 or 2030," whatever the date is. That's some work that we need to do to better understand our carbon footprint. We've done some preliminary work, but it's something that we hope to do a lot more of in this coming year.

Lyn Wineman:

That's fantastic. When KidGlov went through the certification process, we started just thinking, "Hey, this would be a verification of the fact that we're doing things right." But like you, there were questions that we'd never really thought of before. There were things that we believed, but we hadn't really baked into our culture with processes and documentations. I would say, at the end of the day, it made us a better company. How do you feel about that?

Walter Nimocks:

I agree. I totally agree. Yeah. It makes you think that there are companies that are out there that are really performing at a much higher level than what we are. Maybe in the way that health insurance is a big expense for any company, especially for a smaller company.

Lyn Wineman:

Absolutely. I'm nodding my head vigorously. People can't see us, but I'm nodding my head vigorously. It's very expensive, but the right thing to do.

Walter Nimocks:

It is. And it can be as expensive as maybe two employees for-

Lyn Wineman:

Absolutely.

Walter Nimocks:

A business our size and we're not actively trying to recruit two more people right now. But it is expensive. But there's the expectation from B Corp that we provide full healthcare coverage, fully paid for everything. It's something that we're working on. We do provide healthcare, don't get me wrong, but to reach the-

Lyn Wineman:

The best in world level.

Walter Nimocks:

The best in the world. The gold standard, the gold plans, 100% paid for, all that kind of stuff. It's zero deductibles, all that kind of stuff. It's a mountain we're still climbing.

Lyn Wineman:

Right. But at least gives us something to focus on, I think.

Walter Nimocks:

Yes.

Lyn Wineman:

Walter, thank you for sharing about that. We've talked about your purpose, how you started, becoming a B Corp. I want to circle back to the juice because I can tell you love talking about the juice. I wanted to ask you about one other thing that I saw on your website. There's a lot of emphasis on quality and functionality of the plants. And you talked about that a little bit in our first question, but can you tell us a little bit more about the meaning of functional ingredients?

Walter Nimocks:

Well, it's a term that's hard to define honestly. But our definition for it is maybe added ingredients that provide a specific health benefit.

Lyn Wineman:

Okay.

Walter Nimocks:

So, an example of that, we use a number of functional ingredients. We use turmeric, we use ginger, we use ashwagandha. Pretty soon we're going to start incorporating lions mane. We use chaga mushrooms for immunity benefits, strengthening immune systems. We've used holy basil in the past. Well, we still use camu camu. So all of those ingredients add something to the juice above and beyond what the fruit does. So camu camu is the last one I mentioned. It's a little-known ingredient comes from the eastern side of Peru in the Amazon basin. And it got probably more vitamin C than anything they found in-

Lyn Wineman:

Wow.

Walter Nimocks:

And it's something that we incorporate with our pink guava juice. Pink guava also has a lot of vitamin C, and it actually has five times the amount of vitamin C than oranges do.

Lyn Wineman:

Wow.

Walter Nimocks:

Even though it's not a citrus fruit and it's also got lots of lycopene and it's got lots of healthy digestive fiber. But adding in the camu camu really ramps up the vitamin C and that juice, which is vitamin C, of course, is good for immunity. Our mom always told us to...

Lyn Wineman:

Right. I'm thinking as we-

Walter Nimocks:

Love the vitamin C.

Lyn Wineman:

Absolutely. As we head into a cold and flu season here, that sounds like a good natural thing that we all should be leaning into.

Walter Nimocks:

Well, it's also good for skin health, believe it or not. Good for bone health because calcium and vitamin C work together in the body to be able to deliver actually the calcium to your bones. So you need it for a lot of different reasons. It's not just immunity, but it's a vital nutrient. So anyway, that's how I would describe it. Functional ingredients. A roundabout way.

Lyn Wineman:

I think that sounds fantastic. So, Walter, what do you see in the next five to 10 years? What might be different for Just Made and what might be the same?

Walter Nimocks:

Well, I still hope we're producing juices. Still hope that we're servicing our core consumers. As I shared a little bit earlier, Lyn, we're in about 16 states right now, we hope to be in, who knows, maybe all 50 states by then.

Lyn Wineman:

That would be fantastic.

Walter Nimocks:

That would be great. We are also looking at some products that are tangential to juices. So when we created the company we named it Just Made Foods, not Just Made juice. And the reason we did that is because we see this beyond just juice. We see opportunities throughout the fresh departments of retailers for an innovative brand to bring something new, healthy and exciting for the consumer, hopefully.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Walter Nimocks:

We see opportunities a lot of different places in the fresh departments. And so I would say in five years, I would hope that juices are maybe only 50% of our business and the other 50% might be other products.

Lyn Wineman:

That sounds like a great plan. I look forward to watching for you on the shelves of the supermarket where I tend to shop. So, Walter, next, I want to ask you my favorite question and I ask everybody who's

on the podcast this question because I am actually very inspired by motivational quotes. I collect them, I have them written and posted all around me. I would like a Walter Nimocks' original quote to inspire our listeners.

Walter Nimocks:

Okay. Oh my goodness.

Lyn Wineman:

You're on the hot seat.

Walter Nimocks:

Wow. I would say maybe my quote would be, "Take the leap. It's never too late to pursue your dreams." I was 50 years old when we started Just Made, and as I described earlier, this has been something a long time in the making. And it's something that frankly, I've always wanted to have my own business, having spent my career working for others and learned a lot and made a lot of mistakes along the way. I think starting a business at 50, it gave me the ability to have that experience. Also, to have the contacts in the industry that I can call on. And especially when we were smaller and needed an extra hand or needed somebody just to pick up the phone or answer an email. It really helps a lot. I couldn't imagine trying to start a business at 22 or 24, 20 even 30, without having a network behind you and without having a little bit of experience, a few scars that you've learned from along the way.

Lyn Wineman:

Those scars are great teachers. As someone who also took the leap in my mid-40s, that club of entrepreneurs in their 40s and 50s is pretty small. But yet, I actually did some research at one time and the success ratio for those who start their businesses in their 40s and their 50s is actually much higher than those who start younger as well. So, a little bit more inspiration for anyone out there who maybe feels like it's too late to take the leap. I believe it's never, never too late. Walter, for our listeners who have been listening, they want to get in on the functional ingredients, the pink guava, the white pineapple. How can they learn more about Just Made?

Walter Nimocks:

Well, our website's a great place to start, justmade.com.

Lyn Wineman:

That's easy enough to remember. And we will put that link in the show notes.

Walter Nimocks:

Yeah. Social media, we have a wonderful young woman that works on social media for us, so you can see us on Instagram, Facebook, and everything. It's [@justmadejuice](https://www.instagram.com/justmadejuice).

Lyn Wineman:

Perfect.

Walter Nimocks:

And those are probably the two best ways.

Lyn Wineman:

Great. And if we wanted to investigate more, the five cents for teachers, I'm assuming that's on the website as well?

Walter Nimocks:

Absolutely. Yep. It's on the website. You can also email us anytime at hello@justmade.com.

Lyn Wineman:

Very good.

Walter Nimocks:

And somebody will get right back to you if anyone's looking for more specific information.

Lyn Wineman:

That sounds great. Walter, as we wrap up this great conversation today, what is the most important thing you would like our listeners to remember about the work that you're doing?

Walter Nimocks:

I think businesses of any size can be a force for good to make this a better world, a better place to live. There's a lot of problems in the food industry and a lot of it is driven, I think, by just the blind pursuit for profits. And it's always, how can we engineer the cost out of a product as opposed to how do we deliver a good quality product that will stand on its own and will be something that consumers will enjoy and will remember and come back to over and over again? And we try to do that at Just Made, and we use quality ingredients.

One example is our lemonades are made with organic honey. Honey is not a cheap ingredient, it's not a cheap sweetener. We all know the cheap sweetener is high-fructose corn syrup, which costs probably a 10th of what honey does. But we use honey because we feel like it's a more wholesome, a more natural sweetener that we incorporate into our juice and into our lemonades and it delivers a better flavor. That's what I mean by there's a lot of problems with the food industry and I'm hopeful that companies like Just Made will be able to grow and make a difference and correct some of those problems in the future.

Lyn Wineman:

You can lead the way in that effort. Walter, I have really enjoyed this conversation and I fully believe the world needs more people like you and your wife, more companies like Just Made. Thank you for taking the time to share with us today.

Walter Nimocks:

It was my pleasure, Lyn. Thank you so much.

Announcer:

We hope you enjoyed today's Agency for Change podcast. To hear all our interviews with those who are making a positive change in our communities, or to nominate a changemaker you'd love to hear from,

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