

Gourmet dips on the rise

Steve Ingram was in his 40s when he left a career in advertising to study commercial cooking.

After a three-year apprenticeship at The Beach House Restaurant at Whale Beach (now Moby's), he decided to create the "Roy Lichtenstein" of dips in tribute to the celebrated artist. The result was colourful edible art, such as his orange and pomegranate hummus.

At that time, there was a lack of creativity in the dip market, he says. They were overlooked by high-end chefs and undervalued by larger food manufacturers. "Dips are pop-art, but they're still food, and they deserve the same respect as haute cuisine," he says.

He and partner Anmarie Dabinet own Paradise Beach Purveyors, started in 2002 in the family kitchen. The couple took shifts to cook, package and label their products, while friends spent the first Christmas driving eskys of dips to local delis. They were quickly taken up by distributors, then moved to a small commercial space in Manly Vale, where production continues.

The name comes from Paradise Beach in Pittwater, near where the

couple lived when the business started.

Distribution now

includes Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and Victoria.

Ingram grew up in England and traces his love of food to camping trips around Europe. He tried his first "real" pizza in Italy when he was eight. Travelling remains a big influence. The first line of dips recreated flavours Ingram experienced on a world trip in his early 20s, where he ate his way



Edible art ... Steve Ingram; (right) Paradise Beach Purveyors dips.

Produce Show, the smoked salmon and dill won champion dip.

Naomi White

Paradise Beach dips and pita chips are sold at Harris Farm Markets, Thomas Dux stores and delis.

around Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Thailand.

Three new dips were launched last month: roasted beetroot, caramelised onion swirl and jalapeño hummus, which was inspired by a recent trip to Mexico, where Ingram developed a taste for the peppers. Back home, he added chopped ones to hommus on his breakfast toast and a flavour was born. His cooking also plays a big role in the flavours. The beetroot dip is inspired by a Marcella Hazan recipe he discovered in the 1980s.

This year, all of his dips exhibited at the Royal Melbourne Fine Food Awards won medals and, at the Sydney Royal Cheese and Dairy