

## HOT CHOCOLATE INVENTION EXPLODES IN YOUR CUP AND ON TIKTOK

**ABOUT COCOA BOMBS LLC.** This family-owned company began in 2019 in Boise, Idaho, when entrepreneur Eric Torres-Garcia developed the idea for Eric's Original Cocoa Bombs™, chocolate shells filled with marshmallows and other treats that explode and melt into instant hot chocolate when drowned in hot milk. Eric made a video of his creation and posted it on TikTok, where Cocoa Bombs™ became an immediate and unexpected viral success. Since the construction of its new manufacturing facility in the fall of 2021, Cocoa Bombs has expanded its products and services offering private label solutions for chocolate bars, chocolate bombs, hot chocolate sticks, and molds/kits.

**THE CHALLENGE.** The viral success of Cocoa Bombs motivated Eric to find ways to manufacture his product to meet the demand, adhere to food safety requirements, address supply chain needs and develop marketing and distribution channels.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** Eric reached out to a management professor at Boise State, who referred him to TechHelp, a member of the MEP National Network™. Through TechHelp, Eric achieved food safety certification by attending a Food Safety and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) course.

Cocoa Bombs experienced such rapid growth that the company's plastic supplier could no longer keep up. TechHelp's New Product Development Lab (NPD) collaborated with its local supply chain partner, Vessel, to solve Cocoa Bomb's supply chain issues. NPD and Vessel reached out to Panic Plastics, an Idaho-based manufacturer with the size and tooling to meet Eric's needs. Food Specialist Dr. Janna Hamlett of TechHelp and the University of Idaho worked with Panic Plastics to ensure the produced plastics met the food manufacturing specifications necessary. In addition to teaching the Food Safety and HACCP Course Eric attended, Janna helped guide Eric through the process of creating a food grade production facility in Blackfoot, Idaho. Bill Mullane, TechHelp's marketing manager, formed a team of talented Boise State students who worked with Eric to create a new site with fresh features, functionality, and graphics.

"TechHelp has been a vital part of our company's growth since the beginning. We have been working with the team on and off for about 2 years now. Each time we approach them with a new task, the experience of confronting and overcoming new challenges together is nothing short of impressive. Throughout the years, they have served as our external solutions department when the going got tough. If it was not for their prompt action on working with Vessel, we would have not been able to sell products last year. Likewise, without the direct help of Food Specialist Dr. Janna Hamlett, we would not have known how to start the process of becoming an SQF certified facility, a certificate that is highly sought after by food manufacturers validating the safe processing and manufacturing of food products. Needless to say, our friends at TechHelp have played a major role in our company's continued success."

-Eric Torres-Garcia, Owner

## RESULTS



\$330,000 in new sales



\$110,000 in new investments in facilities, products, supplies, and marketing.



\$15,000 in cost savings



A food-grade production facility in Blackfoot, Idaho, to meet rapidly increasing demand.

## CONTACT US



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