

GOURMET NEWS

20 under 40 AwardsDAVID BYRNES, 38, BROKER,
INTEGRATED ORGANIC

How did you get involved in the specialty food industry? "I have always been an entrepreneur. My first job in the natural foods trade—in fact, the only job I've ever had where I worked for someday else—was as the vice president of sales and marketing for Once Again Nut Butter."



realized at that point it was all or nothing. I had to take more risks, devote more time and energy and get things moving, or it wasn't going to happen."

Most valuable lesson learned: "When you believe in something, you've got to put your feet down and your head down and just go."

I knew this is what I wanted to do when... "In my first few years in the organic industry, I set about learning everything I could. I studied processes at all levels and learned what worked and what didn't. I began thinking about ways I could do things differently, including what my company could do to develop services that weren't available in the industry."

Most challenging business moment: "About a year after we (wife Victoria and I) decided to go for it, we were at our limit of our available cash and credit. I still had a tremendous vision of what I wanted our company to be and where I wanted to go, but I

Describe how your business has grown in the past 5.5 years:

"With our first vendor, we put our plan—national placement, distribution, promotions and sales, all coordinated from one office location—into place. One of our first projects was to build a database that can be referenced by vendors and staff from wherever they are. We also created a position for a national promotions coordinator. Just recently, we launched another service program, StoreChek that provides participating vendors with data and information from key retail markets across the country. Finally...our revenues have increased more than 2,000 percent." **GN**