

Contact Information:

Kelly Bock
Marketing Manager
Rolling Pin Kitchen Emporium
kbock@rollingpinonline.com
www.rollingpinonline.com



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Local Business Owners Named “Florida Retailer of the Year”

BRANDON, FL – The Florida Retail Federation (FRF) has recognized **Karen and Dave West**, owners of the **Rolling Pin Kitchen Emporium**, picture left with Rick McAllister and Dan Doyle (Bealls, Inc.), as winners of the prestigious **2010 Florida Retailer of the Year Award for Leadership (ROYAL)**.



“There are many fine retailers in Florida who contribute greatly to the foundation of Florida’s economy,” said Rick McAllister, FRF’s president and CEO. “Our outstanding ROYAL recipients represent retailers who are dedicated to

helping people in their communities. We are pleased to have the opportunity to recognize the Wests this year.”

The annual awards program recognizes retailers who have successfully blended astute business skills with a commitment to their customers, communities, employees and the state’s retail industry. A selection committee comprising retail business operators, educators and other industry officials chose the recipients from a pool of 1,700 retailer nominees from across the state. The Wests, were honored at a luncheon held in conjunction with the University of Florida’s nationally acclaimed *Retailing Smarter* symposium on Thursday, June 24, 2010, at the Omni Orlando Resort at Champions Gate, Orlando.

The Wests opened their first Rolling Pin Kitchen Emporium in 1995 and a second location in Tampa in 1997. In 2006 their dreams of taking the Rolling Pin in a new direction became a reality when they consolidated efforts under one roof combining 3,500 square feet of retail space with a 1,000 square foot Culinary Center.

Today, offering hard-to-find as well as old-fashioned items, trendy tools and small appliances, artisan and gourmet foods for sampling and purchase, and a coffee and tea center, the Rolling Pin is “the” culinary resource for Tampa Bay area “foodies.” Their online store, which ultimately will offer the 18,000-plus items available at their brick and mortar location, helps the couple expand their market.

“Food is a universal language for most of us,” says Dave, who joined Karen in the business full-time in 2004. Formally trained at The French Culinary Institute in New York City, he heads up cooking classes at the Rolling Pin’s Culinary Center. “At The Rolling Pin, we take great pleasure in helping customers create meals and dishes that make “them” the culinary star with their family and friends. We supply the tools, products and knowledge; they supply the passion and love to make each meal special.”

As local business owners, the Wests are firmly committed to source locally whenever possible and promote other area businesses. They seek out products and services from local vendors and showcase chefs from local restaurants for the Culinary Center. Dave is currently working with the newly formed *Slow Food Tampa Bay* group in an effort to unite and bring local producers of high quality produce and meats into area restaurants, cooking schools, and public schools. The group is committed to educating the public, encouraging local eating, and recognizing and assisting those suppliers who use safe and sustainable methods of food production.

The Wests support various community programs and organizations as well. These include the Moffitt Cancer Center and the Alpha House of Tampa Bay, where Dave teaches cooking classes to at-risk mothers and mothers-to-be. The Rolling Pin hosts charity events that benefit the Brandon Nativity Food Bank and many local school and parent/teacher organizations.

"I am so delighted that the Rolling Pin Kitchen Emporium was selected as Retailer of the Year!" said Florida Senator Ronda Storms, who nominated the couple. "I not only love visiting their store, but have enjoyed watching their growth and success through the years. They have a truly first class store and our community has embraced them wholeheartedly."

Since 1999, FRF has recognized outstanding excellence in retailing by presenting the ROYAL awards. The ROYAL selection committee, which includes retail business operators, educators and others, annually chooses award recipients from a pool of nominees located across the state.

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2080 Badlands Drive, Brandon, FL 33511 · (813) 653-2418 · Fax (813) 685-3450
Toll Free (877) 653-2418 · email: info@rollingpinonline.com · www.rollingpinonline.com