

Published August 22nd, 2018

Square Baby opens in Theatre Square

By Sora O'Doherty



Square Baby co-founders in front of their shop in Orinda's Theatre Square. Photo Sora O'Doherty

with honesty and transparency and she wondered,

Two Orinda moms with five children between them at Glorietta School have just launched a new business in town: Square Baby. Square Baby recently launched its online site, selling its products that are delivered to the door frozen, in 100 percent compostable boxes. On Friday, Aug. 30 they will launch their brick and mortar store in Theatre Square, which will be open for business the following day.

Katie Thomson is responsible for the concept of Square Baby, which is to provide convenient baby food that is completely organic and provides 100 percent of a baby's nutritional needs. Thomson was the first nutritionist to work for Starbucks in Seattle. Through her career in the food industry, Thomson learned how food is marketed. Thomson looked at the convenient baby foods in the aisles of the supermarket, and she didn't like what she saw. She found the products to be unbalanced, and their labels to be misleading. She wanted food to be marketed

"Why is no company making this easier for me?"

In 2010, when her son was 18 months old, Thomson left Starbucks and Seattle as her husband's job took the family elsewhere. She began to research what infants need in a day and to develop a meal plan where every meal is balanced, and every day provides 100 percent of a baby's daily requirements. Four years ago, the family moved to Orinda. Thomson began volunteering at Glorietta Elementary School in the lunch program, as well as the wellness program. She met Kendall Glynn, a scientist who specialized in clinical genetics and, Thomson says, "Our stars aligned." Thomson had a business plan and model in place. The two women became partners and co-founders of Square Baby and launched their online business on July 10. Thomson's husband is in advertising, and designed the labels, ingredient cards, shipping boxes, and produced videos for social media.

The way it works is that customers order a two-week supply of meals at a time. For younger babies, this will mean one four-ounce jar of food per day to supplement nursing or bottle feeding. As children grow, they can step up to two, three or four jars per day. Flavors have to pass the Kendall and Katie test: they have to want to eat them. The two women are currently doing all the cooking in a commercial kitchen on the Berkeley-Oakland border. Parents can pick and choose from a variety of dietician-designed recipes. The foods come in three stages: stage one being smooth purees, and later stages introducing more complexity and texture.

Apple curry chicken is a favorite, according to Thomson. One of the goals of the company is to develop children's palates, so they introduce a few herbs and spices into their recipes, using organic ingredients. They use diverse protein sources, including sprouted grains, because they are more nutritious, and organic bone broth from an Oakland supplier. Where baby food pouches are very sweet and have on average 10 to 16 grams of sugar, Square Baby foods have an average of 4 to 5 grams of sugar per 4-ounce meal.

The shop in Theatre Square will be a place where children and parents can come and sample the products. In addition to a tasting bar, there will be gift products for sale, and the partners plan to have events as well. They want the shop to have a community feel, where moms can meet. They may organize some "Mom's Night Out" events.

Each 4-ounce jar costs approximately \$5, and shipments vary from 14 jars (1 jar per day for two weeks) to 28, 42, and up to 56 jars (4 jars per day). The products are shipped to the door with dry ice to keep them frozen. Currently there are 20 recipes on offer, with others in development.

Square Baby will be open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Saturday and by appointment. Learn more at the Square Baby web site: <https://squarebaby.com/>.

Reach the reporter at: sora@lamorindaweekly.com

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