

# Hot spot' Brooklyn sparks Feel Good Foods and the moxie of its CEO

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Vanessa Phillips turned a startup she founded in her New York kitchen into a nationwide frozen food company, Feel Good Foods. What started out as her hopping on a bike and delivering hundreds of gluten-free meals to friends, family and acquaintances around New York City, became Feel Good Foods.

The company, which Phillips runs with her husband – N.Y.C. chef Tryg Siverson – distributes a line of clean label, gluten-free, Asian-inspired appetizers and meals. It currently has distribution deals with both Whole Food Market and Sam's Club. Phillips, the chief executive officer of Feel Good Foods, takes pride in the fact that there aren't many companies out there that deliver frozen meals prepared by a chef, nor are there many startups that have the added benefit of being based in Brooklyn, which has revolutionized the food industry in recent years. Here, Phillips took some time to discuss her favorite places in the borough, what inspires her and why it keeps Feel Good Foods competitive.



Vanessa Phillips is CEO and majority shareholder of nationwide gluten-free frozen food... more

## What do you like most about the city?

I grew up in New York City and I'm very proud to call it my home. I love the culture, diversity, restaurants and constantly evolving neighborhoods. My favorite part of living in New York is that I can spend an entire day walking the streets and not get bored. The city inspires me daily!

## What is it about N.Y.C. startups that set them apart?

We are located in Brooklyn which has become a hot spot and incubator for startup food companies. We have met many other food companies, which has been a great way to network, share ideas and keep a competitive edge. We also love being a part of the Brooklyn community by attending events run by the Brooklyn Chambers of Commerce, going to local food events like Smorgasbord or hosting happy hour events after the Fancy Food Show. All in all, running a company in New York is such an amazing opportunity as New York City offers daily networking opportunities.

## Do you have a favorite restaurant/coffee shop/location that you like to frequent?

We live in Williamsburg, Brooklyn where there is no shortage of coffee shops or restaurants. I usually start my day with a piece of gluten-free pistachio cake and coffee from Depanneur, a local store near my house that I absolutely love. My favorite restaurants change every week as I am constantly trying new spots. The Nomad in Manhattan has always been a favorite and right now I am loving the food at their bar location across the street. I also love weekend brunches and my go-to spot right now is Sadelles in Soho. It's delicious!

## Were there any major lessons you learned about starting a company in New York?

We've learned a lot of hard lessons since launching Feel Good Foods. I don't think any of them are specific to New York as any entrepreneur knows that wherever you live-you are going to run into problems and learn lessons. The biggest lesson I learned, which I didn't know when I was young, is that overnight success is a myth. Building a business takes not only time but a tremendous amount of dedication and unwavering loyalty. It took me getting knocked down many times to learn this.

## Is there one particular financial backer that you worked with that was especially helpful in getting Feel Good Foods launched and why?

When we launched our business, we told our idea to anyone who would listen. As many start up business owners can attest to, getting seed capital is very challenging. Until you have proof of concept, people tend to shy away from the investment opportunity. Lucky for me, I had a very generous and supportive uncle who was willing to take a risk and he loaned us the money we needed for our first production run.

*Anthony Noto is a multimedia journalist focused on venture capital and Silicon Alley startups. Based in New York for the Business Journals, he previously was a reporter at SourceMedia and The Deal LLC. He is a graduate of Rutgers University.*