RANCHO GORDO TO WORK WITH DIANA KENNEDY FOR IMPORTATION OF ESSENTIAL, RARE OAXACAN CHILES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE. FOR MORE INFORMATION, STEVE SANDO (707/259-1935)

NAPA- California-based grower/importer Rancho Gordo New World Specialty Food is working with Mexican food expert Diana Kennedy to import several chiles from the state of Oaxaca, Mexico into the United States. Rancho Gordo owner Steve Sando has traveled with Kennedy throughout the chile-growing regions of the state and met with growers, cooks and friends of Kennedy.

Diana Kennedy’s latest book, Oaxaca al Gusto: An Infinite Gastronomy, chronicles the best of the regional cooking of the state of the Oaxaca. Cooking the recipes can be challenging due to the poor availability of essential chiles, both in Mexico and particularly here in the United States. Kennedy suggested Sando meet with her and her contacts in Oaxaca about the possibility of importing the chiles. (“I didn’t suggest”, says Kennedy “I insisted!”) The focus will be on Chilhuacle Negro, Chilhuacle Rojo, Chilhuacle Amarillo, Consteño and Pasilla de Oaxaca chiles.

“Part of the problem has been a lack of demand. But a bigger issue is growing conditions. It’s a delicate plant and a fussy chile. It must be started in a greenhouse and babied all the way to harvest and even when drying,” said Sando of the Chilhuacle. “The weather must be perfect and it isn’t, the yields are low and the quality suffers.” Further complications come from healthy plants being attacked by the local white fly. “Growers now apply pesticides liberally to fight it. We’re experimenting with organic and sustainable tactics and the initial results have been encouraging.”

An initial shipment will be arriving at Rancho Gordo in the spring with hopefully a large harvest arriving by year’s end. Home cooks and professional chefs will have a chance to prepare some of the classic moles of Oaxaca along with other dishes using the elusive dried peppers. “We’ve seen It happen with beans but I’m really excited to see what non-Mexican chefs will do with these incredible chiles that you just don’t see in the market. “ says Sando.

Kennedy is known as one of the world’s great authorities on Mexican food. From her home base in Michoacan, Mexico, she’s collected recipes and techniques from all corners of the massive country, helping home cooks put the very regional, sometimes exotic, cuisine into perspective through her best-selling books like, The Essential Cuisines of Mexico and From My Mexican Kitchen. Ms. Kennedy was awarded the Order of the Aztec Eagle, by the Government of the Republic of Mexico for her contributions to the documentation of regional Mexican cuisine. The Aztec Eagle is the Mexican equivalent of a knighthood for non-Mexicans.

Steve Sando and Rancho Gordo have been growing, importing and promoting heirloom beans via their website (ranchogordo.com), restaurants, retailers and farmers markets since 2001. French Laundry Cookbook author and chef Thomas Keller declared “We give Rancho Gordo beans a place of honor at our restaurants. “ Sando is the author of Heirloom Beans: Recipes from Rancho Gordo (Chronicle Books) and The Rancho Gordo Heirloom Bean Grower’s Guide (Timber Press)
Steve Sando and Diana Kennedy with chile farmers in the Cañada region of Oaxaca

Steve Sando and Diana Kennedy with a Oaxacan chile grower near Pinotepa Nacional

Santo Domingo in the city of Oaxaca

High res photos available upon request.