

## BUSINESS PROFILE

# Western Springs woman cooks up useful invention for the kitchen



Lisa Najarian of Western Springs uses her creation, Hip Mitts, to cook in her kitchen. The apron comes with mitts attached to the sides. (Doings photo by Mike Johnson)

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As her oven's buzzer sounded, Lisa Najarian hurried down two flights of stairs, grabbed a potholder velcroed to one of the many cooking aprons she has designed and took out a batch of piping hot brownies.

"I cook with them every day," Najarian said about her apron creations. "I'm constantly grabbing something out of the oven or the stove."

Recognizing a need for a more convenient cooking method, the Western Springs resident has developed cooking aprons, which she's dubbed Hip Mitts, that come with potholders attached to the sides with Velcro.

Although Najarian's aprons have been available for purchase for about two years, her creations' recent publicity has helped sales boom such as an appearance earlier this month on an episode of "Hope and Faith."

"I have almost 5,000 hits on my Web site," she said. "Can you believe that? And the greatest thing is I'm having fun."

But the fun didn't come without challenges. Although Najarian can do most of her work from her home office, the business consumes much of her time.

"I really use a lot of my day doing this," she said, adding that she wakes up by 5 a.m. to check her e-mail and orders. "You have to be business-minded."

Although her business took off slowly, Najarian said she never had a negative thought about it since the Hip Mitts idea came to her two years ago.

But she can't take all the credit for the design. If it weren't for a gift her mother sent through the

mail, Najarian might never have developed the apron.

After an unsuccessful search for a chef's apron that wraps around the waist, Najarian requested that her mom pick one up in her travels. Mom later sent her daughter an apron that tied around the waist and potholders she attached with Velcro.

Now, two years later, Najarian has perfected the design and offers the aprons in six different colors on her business' Web site. Customers can order matching potholders in a variety of patterns.

Najarian hopes her success encourages others to pursue their passions.

"I really just want to inspire moms," Najarian said. "It can be done — that's what I want other moms to know. If you have an idea, run with it, because it can be done."

Najarian, who is a mother of two, notices that the business has affected her 12-year-old daughter, Alexis.

"It's really rubbed off on my daughter. She keeps a journal of her inventions and some of them are really cool," Najarian said. "She has definitely got the entrepreneurial side to her."

Najarian has worked with multiple people, solicited the help of friends and organized her business in hopes of realizing success.

She even plans to meet with Target department stores about carrying her product next month.

"I always find a way," she said. "I will never accept 'no' for an answer," she said. "It might not get done today but it will get done at some point."

Najarian's Hip Mitts can be found on her company Web site, [www.loopiedoop.com](http://www.loopiedoop.com).