

# Crave Natural Raises \$650k in Pre-seed Funding to Bring Purposeful Foods to Your Daily Routines

*Crave raised a pre-seed round with \$650k in two months during the pandemic, aiming to lead the wellness food category with delicious Asian-inspired products.*

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-- COVID-19 has led to a substantial segment of people working from home, which has meant more e-commerce sales and more people eating breakfast more regularly. According to Whole Foods's [food trend predictions](#) for 2021, not only are people making more wellness-oriented decisions about what they eat, but consumers have also been increasingly willing to try new, innovative food products, especially for breakfast.



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*Lin Jiang*

The latter has been particularly fortunate for Lin Jiang, Founder and CEO of purposeful food company [Crave Natural](#), which offers a line of benefit-driven, Asian-inspired oatmeal cups. The cups feature highly sought-after wellness benefits and unique flavors like: Black Sesame for Energy, Taro Black Tea for Focus, Osmanthus for Calm, and Adzuki Bean for Glow. In a time where more and more people are seeking plant-based sources of

protein and orienting their diets around concrete health benefits like better mood, energy, and skin care, Jiang's high protein, low sugar oatmeal cups are helping consumers realize their health goals from the inside out.

Thanks to a well-designed, delicious product and over a year of hustle and commitment, Jiang and her Co-founder Ze Li have managed to go from having no experience in the food industry to having their products stocked on Whole Foods shelves across Illinois. In the spring, Crave Natural competed in the 2020 New Venture Challenge at the University of Chicago Booth School of

Business and was awarded as a finalist out of hundreds of startups across different industries. The New Venture Challenge is well known as one of the top accelerator programs in the U.S. and has helped to launch the likes of Grubhub, Braintree/Venmo, and Simple Mills. Most recently, Crave Natural was able to raise \$650k and close their pre-seed round within two months, thanks to generous contributions from local investors and angel groups focused on CPG.

As a pair of young, immigrant professionals, Jiang and Li spent their first year bootstrapping, demoing products, and producing their own samples out of a commercial kitchen. In less than six months, Crave Natural sold over 4,000 handmade samples online and at yoga studio demos before completely selling out. Given their success, Jiang and Li decided to take their ideas to the next level and bring Crave Natural to retail grocery shelves. But, getting into retail was not as easy or as quick as Crave Natural's timeline may seem. Far before officially making the move to retail, Jiang had been calling Whole Foods's national customer service line and trying to get her products shared with buyers. After nearly a year of contacting Whole Foods, in August 2020 Jiang officially launched Crave Natural's line of Asian-inspired purposeful oatmeal cups in Whole Foods stores.

Now, her hard work, creative marketing tactics, and innovative product demos (like free packaged samples and branded hand sanitizers) are finally paying off. Crave Natural products are flying off of shelves as retail sales continue to increase in currently stocked stores. But, there is no time for rest yet: even now, Jiang is preparing for her next stage with 33 more stores lined up for expansion onto the West Coast this November.

With stunning growth and success even amidst a global pandemic, the future is bright for Crave Natural. Due to the hard work of the entrepreneurs and the generosity of many, Jiang and Li have managed to bring their company from yoga-studio demos to big-retail grocery aisles in record time. "Our vision is to build the wellness food category, with more delicious and sustainable products and global flavors," Jiang said.

#### References:

The Next Big Things: Top 10 Food Trends For 2021

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2020 Food & Health Survey. 10 June 2020. <https://foodinsight.org/2020-food-and-health-survey/>

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