



## **CASE STUDY:** **GRENADINE WILD SEA SALT**

### **Background of Company**

Company Name: Grenadine Sea Salt, Ltd. Grenadine Sea Salt USA

Legal Status: Incorporated

Sector: Agriculture/Agro-processing

Address: Old Cart Road, Spring, Bequia,  
St. Vincent and the Grenadines, VC0400

## COMPANY PROFILE

The Grenadine Sea Salt Company (GSS) produces premium solar evaporated sea salt, which is an ancient, organic, wholly sustainable and indispensable culinary ingredient harvested from the most pristine and 'wild' natural setting off the island of Bequia in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Founded in 2017, the company has expanded with the creation of a US subsidiary, Grenadine Sea Salt USA, in July of 2019. With direct-to-consumer E-commerce established through their website, they have various retail outlets throughout the Grenadines, with further plans of expansion.

The company was featured in the June 2020 issue of *Martha Stewart Living Magazine*: *'The Grenadine Sea Salt Company's Artisanal Seasonings—and the Recipes That Feature Them—Will Transport You to the Caribbean,'* and has partnered with award winning cookbook author James Beard, and 'Salt Guru' Mark Bitterman, as well as with the Mandarin Oriental Hotel and Resort in Canouan.

## THE PRODUCT

The salt is produced by solar evaporating seawater in 150 uniquely designed, patent pending stills. Their range of products are wholly organic, artisanal, and sustainable. Currently the sea salt is sold locally and predominately in the US, however plans are being developed to export globally with a focus on gourmet food shops and the culinary and retail market.

In addition to the original 'Wild One' Pure Finishing Sea Salt, the company produces five unique blends, each featuring locally sourced ingredients from the Grenadine islands, for which they are named. Each product is packaged in three size jars: 1 oz., 2.5 oz. and 5.5 oz, as well as 1 and 2 lb. chef's pouches. They have also added eco-friendly gift boxes featuring the Original 'Truly Wild' sea salt, a cinnamon nutmeg 'Canouan' Blend and a coconut 'Bequia' blend. In terms of innovative new products, the company is in the process of developing a line of salt-based bath and body scrubs to add to their product line.



The Grenadine Sea Salt Company also offers a range of flavours celebrating the origin of the salt, this includes; St Vincent Blend (Turmeric & Chilli), Mustique Blend (Mango & Lime) and

Bequia (Coconut) and Canouan (Cinnamon & Nutmeg). The purpose of these blends is to create a culinary experience profiling unique flavours from the region to differentiate from other sea salt companies in the marketplace.

The company is located in one of the oldest structures on the island, a recently restored sugar mill dating back to the 17th century. The range of products and services extend to hosting tours, culinary events and salt tastings, making 'The Mill' and Grenadine Wild Sea Salt a desirable destination for high-end travellers and tour operators, looking for a uniquely local, historical, artisanal and culinary experience.

## DEVELOPING THE COMPANY BRAND

Grenadine Sea Salt (GSS) has several intellectual property (IP) assets registered in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the U.S. to protect against trademark infringement and confusion with other sea salt brands. Currently, there is a patent pending for the unique solar evaporation stills in the U.S. This patent application was submitted in March 2021. The company trademarked its name and logo in July 2020 locally and later in December 2020 in the U.S.

The company's name speaks to the location and specifically the product itself. The logo features an image of a whale's tail which represents the history of whaling on the island of Bequia and in the waters from which the salt is harvested.

### What is a Patent?

A patent is an exclusive right granted for an invention which may be a product or a process. The invention may offer a new technical solution to an existing problem, or it could be a new way of doing something. Patent rights are territorial and are only applicable and enforceable in the country or region in which a patent has been filed and granted. The main criteria which must be met to obtain patent protection for an invention are: (i) Novelty/Newness - details of the patent must not be disclosed prior to filing the application, (ii) there must be an Inventive Step - the invention must be different from what is already known and must not be obvious to skilled people in the industry), and (iii) Industrial Application – the invention must be capable of being used for an industrial or business purpose. Patents are generally protected for a duration of 20 years.





GRENADINE

*Wild Sea Salt*

Fig 1. Grenadine Sea Salt trademark and product design featuring the jar with spoon

## What is a Trade Mark?

Trade marks are signs used in trade to identify products. Your trade mark is the symbol your customers use to identify your goods and services in the marketplace. It distinguishes you from your competitors. You can protect and build upon your trade mark if you register it. Your Trade mark rights are only valid in those markets where you have registered them. Trade marks can take many different forms, they can consist of words, figures/logos, colors, and others.

In the case of this company the word mark “Grenadine Wild Sea Salt” was protected first, and then the combined mark consisting of the words and the logo was applied for. In order to strike a balance between cost of protection and legal coverage, it is advisable to consider well what exactly you will protect as your trade mark.

When registering a trade mark you also have to choose the specific class of goods and services from the NICE Classification for which the protection is sought, in this case class 30 “Sea salt for cooking; edible salt; flavored sea salt for cooking; cooking salt; gourmet finishing salt; edible salt mixed with herbs; edible salt mixed with spices; edible salt mixed with spirits; edible salt mixed with fruits”. Find out more about the NICE Classification [here](#).



Visit [Caribbean TMclass](#) which helps you search for, and verify, the correct classification of those terms for goods and services in accordance with the criteria established by the Nice Agreement.

## PROTECTING MANUFACTURING INNOVATION

Currently, there are more advanced techniques to producing sea salt, such as industrial distillation, kiln drying, boiling, and vacuum evaporation, however these techniques utilise large amounts of energy and much of the rich flavour and healthy benefits of the salt are diminished in the process. Grenadine Sea Salt's unique stills are covered by glass thus making the salt crystals contaminant free. Furthermore, the slower solar evaporation produces a desirably coarser grain as well as the coveted 'Fleur de Sel' crystals which are mixed together in every batch. This combination makes the salt unique in both texture and flavour.

The patent for the drying kiln was applied for in the United States to cover US market as this is their primary market. The solar kiln ensures the Company offers a unique product not only in flavour but also in the manufacturing process thus differentiating it from its competitors. The protection of the kiln design also allows the Company to sell its technology to other manufacturers which can generate further revenue in technology transfer. There are plans to protect the patent in other regions once the US application has been completed.



Fig 2. Solar drying kilns

### Looking to the future: Applying for a Geographical Indication protection

Apart from trade mark protection and patents, the Grenadine Sea Salt Company is also exploring the protection offered by Geographical Indications for their product. Geographical indication protection has the potential to increase the marketing value of the product and can also serve as a tool allowing the company to protect themselves against false claims of products as originating from the Grenadines. Only those producers of sea salt from the

defined geographical area respecting the specifications (specific ways to produce the product) developed for the product will be able to legitimately use the GI name once protected.

### What is a geographical indication?

A **geographical indication** (GI) is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. In order to function as a GI, a sign must identify a product as originating in a given place. In addition, the qualities, characteristics or reputation of the product should be essentially due to the place of origin. Since the qualities depend on the geographical place of production, there is a clear link between the product and its original place of production.

You can obtain protection for Geographical Indications in most of the CARIFORUM countries, in the EU, large parts of Asia and Africa. In other countries like the US, the trade mark system can be used to obtain similar protection.



**Webinar on protecting  
non-EU GIs in the EU**

The key driver for a TM is market differentiation amongst competitors producing a similar product, while the key driver for a geographical indication goes beyond that to protect a specific name known for a product bearing specific qualities linked to a specific geographical area. Protecting a name with a GI means stronger protection compared to trade marks, for instance in cases of imitation or evocation. Due to the strict quality control protocols that need to be in place for a GI to be protected, a GI is a quality guarantee for consumers, and it enables producers to create a storytelling narrative to engage consumers either in the culinary sector or retail outlets.

To obtain GI protection, one of the main factors is to document the link between the product and the specific territory. Learn more about GIs through CarIPi's GI eLearning modules - **[Protecting origin-linked products using Geographical Indications.](#)**



**Elearning course**

The application criteria for a GI for Grenadines Sea Salt will be based on the unique qualities of waters from which the sea salt is harvested. The water is pristine, far removed from any industrial activity and particularly mineral rich due to their proximity to the volcanic islands. Grenadines Sea Salt can therefore be promoted as having unique flavour benefits as a result of these factors.

To take advantage of the potential to use GIs as an IP marketing tool, it will be essential to validate these claims of quality linked with the product and its terroir. More detailed microbiological and flavour profiling work needs to be conducted to help differentiate GSS from its competitors. Further, it will be critical that all sea salt producers from the geographical area come together as a collective to define the specifications for the GI and to develop and manage the code of practice associated with the GI.

In conclusion, there is an opportunity to create a strong branded sea salt product from the Grenadines utilising ingredients from the region and engaging the consumer on a unique culinary journey.

The protection of the trademark and patent of the kilns in the US, the Company's primary market, provides a strong level of brand and product protection. The use of a GI could, in addition, help protect a truly 'distinctive origin' product based on its waters and processing methodology which are geographically and logistically unique. Furthermore, with the recent volcanic activity in the region and disruption to livelihoods there is a strong social impact for supporting the businesses in the Grenadines.

Utilising the above IP tools GSS could play a wider and more strategic role of creating a sustainable business model for the sea salt sector stakeholders whilst ensuring there is strong supply of sea salt for the export market.

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