

Who Owns Who: Celebrate the Last Natural Products Companies Left Free-Standing!

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From all-purpose cleaners to zucchini, natural and organic products are a hot commodity. And that makes the companies that provide them targets for buy-outs by traditional corporations. But when a small, independent company doing the right thing is bought by a big multinational company that generally isn't, its values, mission, culture, innovation, and more are often diluted if not destroyed in the years following the take-over. How severe has the situation gotten? Below is our list of companies that aren't who or what you think they are anymore.

It's a fact that the world ain't what it used to be. And neither are natural and organic product providers. Once not too long ago, such companies were almost exclusively small businesses started by entrepreneurial do-gooders who sought to create a different kind of company that wove social and environmental ideals into all aspects of its operations.

As more people started shopping with their hearts and minds as well as their wallets, these companies developed strong brands, unique products, and very loyal customers. And that made them ripe targets for take-overs by much bigger, much different companies looking to cash in on the suddenly red-hot consumer trend toward healthier, more sustainable products.

Before you could say "free-range dish liquid," the organic and natural products landscape was a much different place. Many of the small local companies we'd come to trust as authentic had been bought out by the corporations we'd been trying to avoid. Their products largely looked the same, worked the same, and tasted the same, but behind the scenes new corporate ownership was making the motivation more about the money than about building a better world.

The good news is that there are still some companies that are what we think they are. In the coming months, we'll be profiling some of these last of a not-bought-out breed so you'll know who to support. But to start, we thought we'd share the list we've assembled of seemingly independent companies that are in fact owned by corporate giants*:

- Adams Baking is owned by Charter Baking Co.
- After the Fall is owned by Smuckers
- Arrowhead Mills is owned by the Hain Celestial Food Group
- Back to Nature is owned by Kraft, which is owned by Philip Morris
- Ben & Jerry's is owned by Unilever
- Boca Burgers are owned by Kraft Foods which is owned by Philip Morris.
- Burt's Bees is owned by AEA Investors
- Cascadian Farms is owned by Small Planet Foods, which is owned by General Mills.
- Celestial Seasonings is owned by the Hain Celestial Food Group
- DeBoles is owned by the Hain Celestial Food Group
- Earth's Best is owned by the Hain Celestial Food Group
- Garden of Eatin' is owned by the Hain Celestial Food Group
- Health Valley is owned by the Hain Celestial Food Group
- Horizon Organic is owned by Dean Foods
- Jason's Natural Cosmetics is owned by the Hain Celestial Food Group
- Kashi is owned by Kellogg.
- Lightlife (purveyors of Gimme Lean, Smart Dogs, Foney Boloney, and Smart Deli Slices) is owned by ConAgra,
- Morningstar Farms is owned by Kellogg
- Mountain Sun is owned by Walnut Acres, which is owned by the Hain Celestial Food Group
- Muir Glen is owned by Small Planet Foods, which is owned by General Mills.
- Nantucket Nectars is owned by Cadbury Schweppes
- Nile Spice is owned by the Hain Celestial Food Group
- Odwalla Juice is owned by Coca-Cola.
- Organic Cow of Vermont is owned by Horizon, which is owned by Dean Foods
- Rudy's Organic Bakery is owned by Charter Baking Co.
- R.W. Knudsen is owned by Smuckers
- Imagine Foods (Rice Dream) is owned by the Hain Celestial Food Group
- Santa Cruz Organics is owned by Smuckers
- Seeds of Change is owned by M&M Mars Candy.
- Simply Asian is owned by McCormack & Co.
- Spectrum Organics is owned by the Hain Celestial Food Group
- Stonyfield Farm is owned by Danone
- Terra Chips is owned by the Hain Celestial Food Group
- Thai Kitchen is owned by McCormack & Co.

- Tom's of Maine is owned by Colgate
- Tostitos Organic is owned by Pepsi
- The Vermont Bread Company is owned by Charter Baking Co.
- Walnut Acres is owned by the Hain Celestial Food Group
- Westbrae Natural is owned by the Hain Celestial Food Group
- Westsoy is owned by the Hain Celestial Food Group
- White Wave (makers of Silk Soy Milk) is owned Dean Foods
- Worthington Foods is owned by Kellogg
- Yves Veggie Cuisine is owned by Hain Celestial Food Group

**Note that the corporate landscape is rearranging itself all the time as companies change hands and controlling interests shift. This list represents our best effort to ascertain who owns what at the moment.*