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**Bradmer Foods invests in Charles Chocolates**  
[11.16.2007](#)

EMERYVILLE, Calif.--Facing growing pains, Charles Chocolates based here received an investment from Bradmer Foods Fund, a specialty food and organic fund on Nov. 1.

It's the first investment for the fund, explained Adam Borden, managing director at Bradmer Foods, based in Baltimore. The fund will invest in food industry manufacturers and retailers with \$1-\$10 million in revenue.

Charles Chocolates is a specialty confection company started in 2004 by Chuck Siegel, who has worked in the specialty confections industry off and on for 20 years. It's his second sweet venture. Back in 1987, Siegel began Attivo Confections and sold it seven years later. Then Siegel did some work in high tech. "If you lived here (in the San Francisco Bay area) and didn't, you were a pariah," he said.

Over the years, Siegel continued to stay involved in the confections industry. "About three and a half years ago, I was doing consulting and realized that I missed it," Siegel said. Shortly thereafter, he started Charles Confections.

The confections are made using quality chocolates, organic herbs, fruits and nuts as well as organic cream and butter from Straus Family Creamery. Everything is made by hand in very small batches using traditional techniques, and confections are shipped to customers within three days of being created.

Signature items include butterfly-shaped confections with peanut butter filling called Peanut ButterFlies, Pate de Fruit made from single-varietal wines such Gewurztraminer and Cabernet Sauvignon, an assortment of chocolate bars, panned almonds and fleur de sel caramels.

Borden said he was impressed with Charles Chocolates' product line. Siegel "has been very thoughtful about growing it. The diverse product line speaks to his capabilities," said Borden.

With the undisclosed investment, Borden joined Charles Chocolates' board of directors. Borden, who helped develop an Internet strategy for caviar purveyor Petrossian, will draw on that experience to help the chocolate company drive traffic and sales to its Web site, [www.charleschocolates.com](http://www.charleschocolates.com), he said. "Many small organizations want to grow their business but they don't have resources," said Borden. Using techniques to optimize rankings in search engines and key word buying, Internet strategies "can be very complicated."

Borden and Siegel first met three years ago at a Fancy Food Show when Siegel was just launching the company. Now the confections are in 600 stores nationwide. "We've been growing quickly," Siegel noted.

The pair has kept in touch, and Siegel approached Borden when he was looking for outside investors.

"Working capital is the lifeblood of a small company," said Siegel. "When you are growing, you get to a point where you have to turn to outside sources. Banks are reluctant to give financing to two-year-old companies."

The cash infusion allows Charles Chocolates "to keep growing at the same pace. We have to invest to sustain that growth. We've doubled our sales every year we've been in business," Siegel said.

Next year, Charles Chocolates plans to expand its distribution and its sales force. "We have really good coverage on both coasts," said Siegel. "It's the middle of the country we need to fill out."

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