

# Holy Water

A small mom-and-pop company is on a (refreshing) mission from God.

**S**ITTING IN HER TINY SHOP IN AN OBSCURE office complex in Garland, bottled-water magnate Cindy Bender hesitates to reveal the final step in her production process. The result, Rain Fresh, has become the best-selling bottled water at six area Whole Foods stores and is delivered to the homes of 2,500 customers. Bender smiles sheepishly and then covers that smile with her hand as she shares her secret.

"I pray over the water," she says. "People are going to think we're running some kind of cult out here, but it's true."

Bender further reveals that she used to play Bible-on-tape recordings to the water through a transducer—until the transducer broke. Her husband Joseph walks in, figures out what his wife has been talking about, and says, "You didn't tell him that, did you?"

The Benders themselves know it sounds a bit strange. But they are, by all appearances, just average folk with a fantastic story about

how they got into the bottled-water business. In the early '80s, when Joseph was diagnosed with the Epstein-Barr virus, his doctor told him to drink purified water. Joseph sent test samples to a lab from off-the-shelf brands to find the purest, but he was not encouraged by the results. So Joseph, who is also dyslexic and whose formal edu-



education ended after a couple years at Tyler Junior College, taught himself how to purify his own water. It was pure but nothing special. Then something happened.

In 1985, according to the company's literature, Joseph's truck broke down in an East Texas thunderstorm, and a tornado dropped from the clouds. He took refuge in the only spot he could find, a hollowed-out tree. The tornado's vortex passed within several feet of him, and Joseph says he "tasted a sweet, soft water in the air." He decided to reproduce that water as best he could, and Rain Fresh was born. Before long, orders were pouring in.

Now Rain Fresh's production process entails 24 steps (officially) that make it unique in the industry. Besides being carbon-filtered, ozonated, and reverse-osmosed, Rain Fresh goes through a magnetic field that removes "negative memories" of pollutants. In step number 20, it is enriched with oxygen in a vortex that mimics the conditions inside a tornado. Then, of course, there is the final step, after bottling.

"I just believe that doing business with God in mind is the only way to do it," Cindy says. "I feel like I gave my business to God and I just run it for him as a servant. Does that sound weird?" —*Tim Rogers*

## Double Trouble

With the opening of Hotel ZaZa, it seems this town has gone a little cuckoo. Here's how the repeaters stack up.

|           | ZAZA                                    | TOM TOM                    | DADA                           | NANA                   | WANG ZHIZHI            | OVERALL EDGE |
|-----------|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Premiere  | Oct 2002                                | June 2002                  | 1995                           | 1964                   | July 8, 1977           | Zhizhi       |
| Size      | 146 rooms, plus 13 theme suites         | 100 people                 | 225 people                     | 180 people             | 7-foot-11, 220 lbs.    | ZaZa         |
| Position  | Uptown                                  | West Village               | Deep Ellum                     | Wyndham Anatole Hotel  | Center                 | Zhizhi       |
| Theme     | Moderate Mediterranean                  | Contemporary, casual Asian | Casual urban                   | Upscale New American   | Sporty Chinese         | Zhizhi       |
| Noted For | High-profile launch during down economy | Pad Thai                   | Giving Edie Brickell her staff | Great view of downtown | 3-pointers, no defense | Nana         |
| Number    | 214-468-8399                            | 214-522-1894               | 214-744-3232                   | 214-761-7479           | 16                     | Zhizhi       |

### AND THE WINNER IS: WANG ZHIZHI

NOTE: Zhizhi was 40 a Newark at press time, but his future with the team was in doubt. Should he not wind up on the bench, his victory instead goes to former U.S. Secretary General Donato Budino-Grek. Ted Te, ZaZa, and WdM's didn't make its final cut.



20  
gallons

Amount of bottled water the average American drinks annually