

AS SEEN IN



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thenextBIGTHING

The Big Winner

DMC contest raises a glass to innovative Sipatiniz design.

The martini is a symbol of style and sophistication, something inventor Renee Williams adores. It's the spills she could do without.

"I like the shape of the martini glass itself — it's elegant and fun — but you always get that slosh with any slight movement," she says.

Two years ago Williams began wondering if she could design a glass that allowed partygoers to move around with ease. That curiosity led to the creation of Sipatiniz (pronounced sip-a-TEE-nee-z), a spill-resistant martini glass with a curved rim that keeps all that Appletini goodness inside, with no embarrassing mess.

Sipatiniz — along with Good for You Girls and Vintage Hem — were chosen as the three "Next Big Thing" finalists to showcase their new products at the Dallas Market Center's January 2009 FINDS Dallas Temp Show, held during the Total Home and Gift Market. The finalists were judged on concept, design, innovation and presentation.

During the show, Williams was crowned the winner and awarded a prize package

worth more than \$10,000, which includes exhibit space at the June 26–29 at the June 2009 FINDS Dallas Temp Show, and consultations from experts in branding, public relations and visual merchandising. "The debut at the Dallas Market Center was amazing for me," she says. "The contest generated a lot of interest in my product, and it was a very successful show. I made a lot of great contacts and got some orders."

The clear martini glasses, which retail for about \$18, began shipping in mid-April.

A UNIQUE VIEWPOINT

Williams still seems in awe of the award recognition, but admits that viewing ordinary things with a twist is a way of life for her. "It comes natural for me to look at things a different way," says the 15-year information technology professional, who continues to work full time. "It's in my DNA."

Her love of watching inventor TV programs, such as CNBC's "The Big Idea," reinforced her belief that if she saw a need for a product like spill-resistant martini glasses, then other people might too.

But taking a product idea full circle is an-



Renee Williams' Sipatiniz invention won the grand prize in the Next Big Thing contest.

other matter. First, she created a rough prototype with a glass and construction paper. After extensive research, she patented her idea and found a glass manufacturer to recreate her hand-blown creation. "When I got the first one, I was like, 'Oh my goodness, I cannot believe it's here and it really worked,'" she says.

Williams is fielding coast-to-coast orders through her Rowlett, Texas, company Fabulous Touch Gifts and continues to ramp up marketing efforts. So far, Sipatiniz hasn't been a hard sell. "It's a fun and practical new product, and in today's economy I think it's different enough to catch consumers' eyes," she says.

More than half of the people who visited her exhibit booth in January asked if Sipatiniz were available in a pool-friendly material such as acrylic. "The people have spoken," Williams says. She plans to extend the line, which she notes can hold either alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverages. (Williams says she isn't a big drinker and actually prefers the latter.)

She's confident she would've eventually developed Sipatiniz on her own, but agrees it would've taken much longer had she not won the Next Big Thing contest. Dallas Market Center plans to honor another round of three Next Big Thing finalists at the June market.

"Winning this award shows that you should pursue your interests and what makes you happy," she says. "It's the coolest thing that there was something in my head and now I can look at it. As far as getting it out there, Next Big Thing was a major vehicle to that."



Sipatiniz' unique curved rim helps prevent spills, allowing partygoers to move around with ease — and no mess.