



PHOTOS BY ROBERT MCLEROY/STAFF

Aaron Escamilla (left), a junior executive, and his father, Robert Escamilla, president and CEO of BE&SCO, oversee a company that sells \$5 million a year worth of tortilla- and tamale-making machines.

# Tortilla-maker maker

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**B**ehind every freshly made tortilla there's an elderly aunt or grandma pressing away at the doughy mix. Well, not every tortilla.

Thanks to Robert Escamilla and Bakery Equipment & Service Co., hundreds of restaurants and companies around the world are able to press out hot tortillas on his tortilla machines.

"My first year, I sold four machines," said Escamilla, 60. "The following year, I sold 43. As we moved along, the refinements came."

Now, Escamilla sells \$5 million worth of machines annually from his 60,000-square-foot office off Culebra Road. These machines are the Mercedes of tortilla making.

Some cost as much, too. The largest makers, which can press out 1,800 tortillas an hour, can cost \$60,000.

But that's not stopped businesses all over town, the United States and 27 other countries from ordering the machines. BE&SCO has shipped equipment to Japan, England, New Zealand, Russia and the Fiji Islands.

"Every ethnic group has a flatbread of some sort," Escamilla said. "We're actually promoting a flatbread machine."

Several temples in India have ordered the machines to make one of



Tortillas come off a conveyor on a machine undergoing testing at BE&SCO, which has customers around the world, including Disney and NASA.

their staples, chapati. A swami has blessed BE&SCO and is making his first trip to San Antonio next month just to visit the factory.

"We have to identify their culture, their dos and don'ts," Escamilla said. "We're working on educating ourselves."

Escamilla has been educating himself in the tortilla machine business since he and his father,

*"As we moved along, the refinements came."*

**ROBERT ESCAMILLA**  
president and CEO Bakery Equipment & Service Co.

Elias, started working together in 1965. Their original "factory" was his father's 150-square-foot garage.

When BE&SCO started, it would buy bakery equipment, refurbish it and then send it to Mexico and South America. In 1979, Escamilla decided to start designing his own mass-producing equipment.

"There was a manufacturer in California who'd been in business a lot longer than I had," Escamilla said. "So I ran into a brick wall. I thought 'If I can't go in the front door, I'll go in the back.' So I started building smaller machines."

With that, he began convincing restaurants and businesses they would be better off making their own tortillas in-house.

Now, BE&SCO's customers include Disney, the University of Texas, NASA and Rosario's.

Escamilla says he relies on his 34 employees for the company's success. He's proud of the fact that he even pumps in air conditioning into the factory area for them.

"The people who work here are BE&SCO," Escamilla said.

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