

# Brent Laffey: Armada Nutrition History and Manufacturing Expansion | PPP #074

written by Mike Roberto | November 1, 2022

<https://blog.priceplow.com/podcast/brent-laffey-armada-nutrition-074>



Brent Laffey joins PricePLOW Podcast Episode #074 to talk about Armada Nutrition's history and their new manufacturing expansion!

**Brent Laffey** of *Armada Nutrition* – a premier contract supplement manufacturer – re-joins the PricePLOW Podcast to talk about Armada's expansion. Armada is well-known for producing some of the world's most popular supplements in their highly-acclaimed Tennessee facility, but now they're expanding with an even larger facility in Salt Lake City, Utah.

We bring Brent onto the show to talk about Armada's history, its other closely-related businesses (such as Prinova of the NAGASE group), supplement technologies such as blending, and the extraordinary amount of testing Armada performs on the products they produce. Then we get into the Utah expansion, which marks a major upgrade in the company's capabilities and throughput. Along the way, you'll learn about flavor technology, industry careers, and even types of dairy used in different whey proteins.

This is an incredibly informative episode for any supplement user or entrepreneur, highlighting how to do things the *right* way – a stark difference from episode #027, where we last invited Brent on the podcast to discuss the ABH Pharma indictment / scandal. The Armada way is clearly the better way.

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Show Notes: [The History and Future of Armada Nutrition](#)

- **0:00 – Introductions**

- **1:00 – Discussion of Brent’s background**

His family was in the nutrition industry. As a college football player, Brent really started honing on food and nutrition, leading to him graduating and going to work for Premium Ingredients, now called Prinova.

- **3:50 – Founding Armada Nutrition**



In 2015 Brent founded Armada Nutrition with Prinova as a partner. They immediately set themselves apart by embracing *transparency* and *vertical integration*. 7 years later, Armada employs 700 people.

- **4:40 – Scaling Armada in Tennessee**

In 2016, Armada committed to major scaling when they bought a 300,000 sq. ft. facility in Tennessee. They hit the ground running by holding onto 104 of the employees that were previously working at the facility.

- **6:30 – Focusing on flavoring**

Armada set their focus heavily on flavors. By 2020, Armada was sold out, leading to the purchase of a second facility in Utah.

- **7:26 – Buying the Capstone facility after the MusclePharm blow-up**

Ben asks Brent how much of Capstone’s efficiency and technology was changed when Armada moved in.



This is an image of Armada Nutrition's facility in Tennessee, taken from Armada's site. Later we talk about the newer Utah facility.

When Armada bought the facility, it was bought as a fully-running facility. However, at the last minute, the IP from the previous owners was withheld, leading to Armada having to build operations and processes from *scratch*. This was the conclusion the previous facility owner, Capstone went under due to issues with MusclePharm.

- **9:32 – Industry Transparency**

Armada helped shift the industry towards more transparency, starting with copious footage of their own facilities. Brent loves working with companies that take an open-label approach to their products.

- **12:40 – Prinova's Flavoring**

How is Prinova so much better at flavoring than everyone else?



Owned by the NAGASE Group, Prinova is a premier flavor house

Brent explains that Armada employs people in the lab that are *trained* in the lab as flavorists, rather than as more general chemists. Armada can also pull from an extensive flavor library from Prinova whenever needed.

- **14:30 – Exclusive flavors**

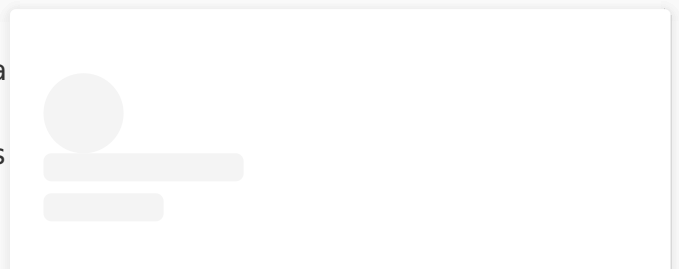
Armada often makes custom flavors for each client. Strict obligations in contracts ensure more general flavors can be used by other companies, and Brent prefers to avoid more specific flavor conflicts.

- **17:35 – Are brands moving to control their supply chains?**

The larger the company, the more they control their own supply chains. But in general, customers go to Armada so that *they* can worry about those headaches for them. Armada has been able to control their own supply chains more than most due to their buying power.

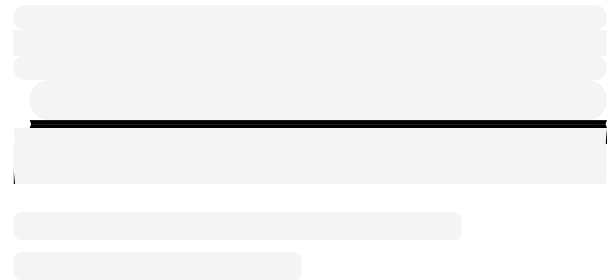
- **19:50 – Armada’s new Utah facility**

After out-growing their facility in Tennessee, Armada started looking for a new facility. They settled on Utah due to geographic considerations, logistics benefits, and the large presence of experts in the field.





[View this post on Instagram](#)



A post shared by Benjamin Kane (@thesuppbouncer)

- **21:28 – Does Armada have any job listings for entry-level positions?**

Armada's website has a careers page with every salaried position listed. In addition, Brent says that all of their sites are hiring for warehousing and manufacturing positions constantly.

- **22:30 – Careers in Contract Manufacturing**

Brent went on Fouad Abiad's podcast, leading to 4 or 5 candidates that became employees.

- **23:18 – Is humidity a factor when deciding on a location?**

Absolutely. HVAC costs are significantly impacted by humidity level. In Armada's operations, relative humidity has to be below 43%, or else clumping can arise, leading to entire batches of product being ruined.

- **23:58 – Utah facility details**

Armada's new Utah facility is 438,000 sq. ft., organized around vertical manufacturing, allowing them plenty of room in which to grow.



- **24:55 – Blending**

Armada has adopted a pharmaceutical grade blending system that uses sealed bins, meaning there is no air and no room for contamination. This blending system leads to more efficient and consistent lots.



**CAREERS**

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Interested in working for an industry leader in Tennessee or Utah? Check out **Armada Nutrition's** [Careers page!](#)

- **27:45 – The TikTok girl who sold supplements from a blender**

Ben brings up a viral TikTok of a girl who blended pre-workout in a blender and sold it online. Brent asks for her number. This is from a TikTok video on PricePLOW that went viral.

- **29:00 – How involved is Brent in flavor reviewing and tasting?**

He takes a less active role than he used to, but still tries to taste everything and give honest feedback. Honest flavor iteration is vital. A good contract manufacturer is willing to keep iterating until the flavor is just right.

- **32:50 – Blending – How do you avoid having hotspots in a scoop?**

Blending instructions need to be very specific. In order to validate that the blending has been done correctly, Armada runs tests multiple times on raw

materials, tests at the end of a blend, and tests at the beginning, middle and end of each run.

If the content of specific ingredients is too low or high, you have to reblend and build up the volume.

- **34:50 – Rauwolfia Example – How to spread very small doses?**



Look at this powerhouse squad Brent recently joined on Fouad Abiad's podcast!

Most formulas that contain Rauwolfia contain a minute amount – usually around 1 mg per scoop – which makes it very difficult to make sure you get the right dose. Carrier ingredients like maltodextrin are typically added in and pre-blended, so that it is easier to add in to other batches later.

- **37:00 – Where do the carbs come from in a lot of these products?**

The carbs come from the carriers in the flavors. Flavors are spray dried and put on a carrier like maltodextrin, which adds some carbs to the mix. The more flavor, the more maltodextrin, the more carbs.

- **39:00 – How many lab tests are performed on a standard pre-workout supplement?**

3 or more sets of tests. Every raw ingredient will get tested upfront, then each blend is tested, and finally each batch of bottled is tested, with samples being taken at the beginning, middle and end of each batch.

- **39:53 – Armada's third party lab**

Usually manufacturers just do certification of analysis, not full testing – in 2018, Armada started its own lab, allowing them to do full panels of testing.

- **40:30 – Will Brent lab test some mayonnaise for Mike?**

Mike wants to test some mayonnaise, sadly Brent isn't in the mayonnaise-



testing business.

- **42:15 – At what point does a batch fail a test?**



Generally, every ingredient needs to be within 10% within label claim.

- **44:55 – Do you ever mix batches of protein?**

Brent says absolutely not unless a brand asks for a specific reason. Different proteins come from different cheeses, each having different flavor profiles. Changing and mixing it could lead to inconsistency in the end product. They often prefer a whey protein that comes exclusively from dairy manufacturers that are making *mozzarella cheese*.

- **47:11 – Up and coming brands**

Tons of new brands are putting out huge-scoop pre workouts, making mega doses of ingredients much more concerning. Brent has concerns that the pendulum is swinging too far in this regard.

- **49:13 – Mega-Scoop Formulas?**

Brent talks about how mega-scoop formulas are also eating into margins in the contract manufacturing industry, as well as driving up the price for the end-consumer to absurd levels.

Brent sees the problem correcting itself, but with brands having “extreme versions” of their products for customers that prefer it.

- **52:38 – Vertical integration for Armada?**

As business grows, have you considered pursuing more vertical integration?



Armada Nutrition's Utah Grand Opening, taken from Armada's Instagram (currently @armadanutritionn)

Armada is looking to scale both horizontally (offering new platforms, rather than just powders) and vertically, perhaps driven by acquisitions of innovative companies that develop new, science-driven ingredients.

- **54:39 – Armada's own Trademarked ingredients?**



Visit Armada's booth at the next industry

Armada currently doesn't focus on trademarked ingredients, but would love to get more into development through partnerships with companies like Nutrition21.

- **57:25 – Wrapping up, farewells**

- **58:04 – Carbon Culture Gym**

Brent has a gym named *Carbon Culture* in Franklin, TN reopening after remodel. Chris Bumstead event with Raw Nutrition team on November 4th. Q&A with the RAW team, Chris's last appearance before Olympia.

The gym is a passion project –it has 80 new pieces of top-of-the-line equipment and aims to become the fitness mecca of Tennessee.

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