

## A LOCAL LOOK

# Putting a new Twist on cleaning

### Boulder firm sells biodegradable sponges, cloths

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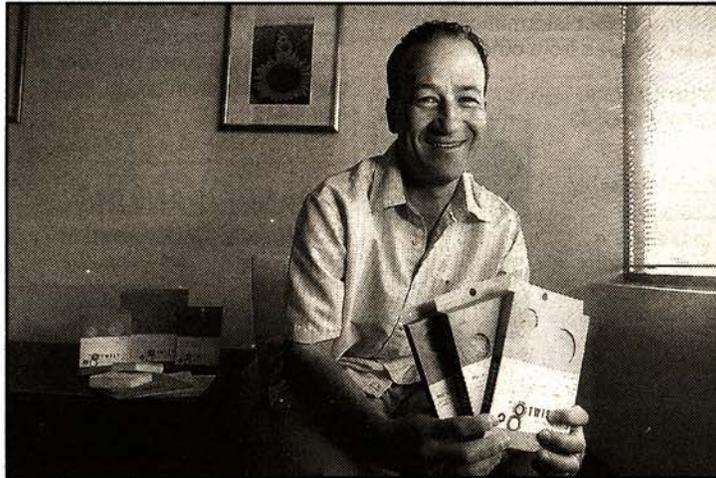
When Brian Ross was in law school, his first business idea was making plastic cutlery from recycled plastic.

The action wasn't that feasible then, he said, but the thought stuck with the environmental law student.

Having a persistent mindset appears to be paying off for Ross.

Years out of law school, Ross recently launched a new company, Twist, which is just weeks away from having its biodegradable sponges and cleaning cloths hit the shelves of a number of natural products stores around the nation.

"Making greener products just makes a lot of sense for me," said Ross, whose resume includes positions at firms such as Oregon Chai and Boulder-based Izze Beverage Co.



Marty Caivano | Daily Camera

**Brian Ross**, founder and CEO of Twist, a company that makes eco-friendly cleaning products, shows off some of his products.

But up until this point, Ross had only worked with beverage companies. After he left Izze in 2005, he and business partner Egil Wigert saw that while other cleaning products underwent some kind of "greening" evolution, the sponge seemed relatively untapped.

Last year, Ross and Wigert, who previously started a sponge cloth company, decided to use cellulose, a natural polymer

found in wood and plants, as the base for the products. After lining up a Norwegian investor and purchasing a manufacturing plant in Tetla, Tlaxcala, Mexico, the company was able to get the products made in December.

Earlier this month, Ross manned a booth at the Natural Products Expo West, the industry's largest trade show, in Anaheim, Calif., and showed off the color-

ful products — the Euro Sponge #10, the Euro Cloth #20 and the Loofah Sponge #50 — and touted their unique attributes. The products are biodegradable, sustainable and durable, Ross said, adding that one Euro Cloth equals about 17 paper towel rolls.

Those elements made the items attractive to Jerard Whitehead, assistant grocery coordinator for Whole Foods Market's Rocky Mountain region.

"That right there was great, it's saving the trees," Whitehead said. "It has been a slower trend compared to the other categories. It's not something that we haven't been looking at or looking for, it just has not been available. The (household cleaners) industry, in my opinion, has been behind."

The company was able to line up additional accounts and expects to be in some natural foods stores — including Whole Foods, Wild Oats and Vitamin Cottage — in the next few weeks.

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