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Toast With the Most

WHAT: Toaster that imprints designs on toast

WHO: Linda Carlish of LC Premiums Ltd.

WHERE: New York City

WHEN: Started in 1993

When Linda Carlish heard last year that a grilled cheese sandwich said to bear an image of the Virgin Mary sold for \$28,000 on eBay, she laughed. "I could do that [on toast] every day and be making lots of money," says Carlish, inventor of the Pop Art Toaster, which imprints fun images on bread as it toasts.

Carlish, 46, who previously worked for a costume jewelry company, created LC Premiums back in 1993. She set up shop in her studio apartment with a laptop, a fax machine and \$2,000, and initially set out to develop premium jewelry and glassware.

But that focus changed in 2003 while Carlish was on a business trip visiting a Chinese factory. She spotted a "rickety" toaster, spent six inspired months redesigning its inner plate system, and then approached



Target with a novel idea: How about a toaster that could imprint Target's bull's-eye logo onto toast? The

company loved the pitch,

but the idea really took off when Carlish won New Product of the Year at the January 2004 Promotional Products Association International trade show.

Her success with additional corporate clients like Fox TV and Trump Plaza inspired her to make the product available to consumers as well. After enlisting help from a factory to remodel the inside of the toaster to allow for interchangeable plates, the Pop Art Toaster was born. Now, fun images like smiley faces, a sunshine design, a Santa hat and more can be branded on toast.

Starting at \$29.95, the toaster is sold at retailers such as QVC and Target.com. And sales are sizzling, with 2005 projections at \$3.3 million. Says Carlish, "This has changed the entire face of a toaster." —Sharon Tang-Quan