

# TECHONOMY NYC

## Startups Stirring Up the Future of Food

### Presentation:

Gabe Blanchet, CEO, Grove Labs

(Transcription by [RA Fisher Ink](#))

**Blanchet:** That cues me up pretty well. So my name's Gabe Blanchet. I started a company called Grove about five years ago. So five years ago, I was in my—I was coming home to my dorm room at MIT and my roommate was on the floor, cutting PVC pipes and plastic crates. He had just spent the summer on a farm in Virginia, where he learned about advanced farming techniques. He saw tiny prototypes of the types of stuff that David, very rudimentary versions, of what David just spoke about. Little hydroponic system, aquaponic system.

So he came back to Cambridge in the middle of the Boston winter. I come in and he's cutting PVC pipes, siliconing them together, says there's going to be a fish tank, there's going to be garden beds, and we're going to become farmers. Urban farmers. And so I thought it was wacky. I wasn't really into it, but he never really cared what I thought.

[LAUGHTER]

So a few months later, we're in our dorm room and we're harvesting fresh greens just about every day. We're experimenting with things like tomatoes and peppers; we're growing all sorts—probably growing over 30 different crops at a time. And that's when it hit both of us, that when you can teach people how to farm in small scales, you can really inspire a whole new outlook on the future of agriculture.

So this was especially relevant and inspired us to start Grove when one of our advisors, in the early days, brought his eight-year-old over to our first prototyping lab. And to just watch this kid's curiosity. This was a young boy who'd grown up in a city and had some experience hiking and being outside. But when you can bring the farm and nature to people, we saw the profound social impact that we could have.

So we took a look, in the early days, at gardening. We looked at agtech and we understood that these technologies, hydroponics, aquaponics, efficient LED lights, a lot of things David just spoke about, were going to be used on a commercial scale. It just makes a lot of sense. But we've always been passionate about looking at the smaller scale. Homes, restaurants, and schools.

So when we started to look around, we realized that there's actually a lot of people who already garden. About 41 million households, so that's about 1 in 3 garden in some capacity. What if we could give people tools to harness this new wave of agtech and bring them into the new age of farming?

So we started with a sketch back five years ago. This is what I want my kitchen to look like and now it does.

[LAUGHTER]

But you can see, even from the beginning, it's been about many different products at many different price points, harnessing a lot of the things that are going on in agtech right now, especially indoor agtech, to bring this to the people, directly, all the way to the people.

We built this product, the Grove Ecosystem. This went on the market about three years ago. It's been well-received. Certainly, the number of people around the world who've been inspired, shared the video, exceeds from 10 million. And we've sold about 400 units here in the United States. And as we started to scale—and so I actually spoke at Techonomy two years ago, and this is where the story was. What's happened in the past two years is that many of the other kitchen appliance companies and home device companies saw what we did, and saw what a few other young companies were doing in this space, and the type of reaction we were getting from people all over the world, really. The country, but all over the world.

So leading appliance companies just wanted to start to meet this demand. So we've really shifted our business to focus on the k-cups. The gardening pods that are going to integrate with our partners, who are multinational kitchen appliance companies who actually build the devices, and then we sell the individual k-cups. This is an example of one device we're working on, countertop device, seen much smaller. Here's an example of another full kitchen appliance. From this device, you can expect for a family of four to harvest two or three times a week, a main salad.

So we're not talking about production on the same scale that a lot of indoor farming, and especially, outdoor farming. We're not talking about the value proposition of yield and productivity. We're talking about nature, we're talking about oxygen, we're talking about air filtration, we're talking about bringing farming back into people's lives in a modern context.

On the left here, we've got my co-founder, who is kneeling on the floor in the dorm room. Now, he grows just about all of his own food in his house, and he's also got this large greenhouse in the back. And now, we've transformed my kitchen into, basically, the sketch that we sketched out five years ago. You can see it on the left here, with greens growing just about everywhere.

So we imagine a future where farming is done out in the big fields, is done in warehouses, in rooftops, but it's also done by the people, for the people. Thank you.