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## ZingaMino: A new twist on venerable game of dominoes

Sunday, May 21, 2006

By Alison Roberts

The Sacramento Bee

Dahmane Dahmani and his son, Yanni, get their game on.

"Dig, dig, dig," says Yanni with a sly look of satisfaction, as his father has to reach into a pouch holding dominoes until he can find one to play.

The two have done more than just play dominoes more times than they can count at home. Dahmani, who is an Intel engineer, and his 11-year-old son have invented their own board-game variation on the venerable tile-slapping sport.

ZingaMino is their baby. It's a clever game in which the tiles are played on a board of four interconnecting circles. The father and son hope it will win in the very long-shot competition of profitable board-game development.

The game uses dominolike tiles with colored dots in four colors orange, green, purple, and yellow and 16 tiles in each group that must be played in the correspondingly colored circle. The connecting colored circles can be bridged with doubles tiles or "wild" Zinga tiles.

If you have no tile that can be played, you have to draw new tiles until you do. The winning player is the first to score 64 points. Two to eight may play, but Dahmani says it's most fun with three to four players.

Dahmani says he has spent about \$55,000 on development of the game and has had 2,000 units produced. Each game sells for \$29.95 at [www.zingamino.com](http://www.zingamino.com).

Domino-game variations, such as Mexican Train and Chicken Foot, have given the game a boost in recent years, particularly among women, Pitzer says.

John Kaufeld, a spokesman for the Game Manufacturers Association, says firm sales numbers for games like ZingaMino are hard to come by. They are considered part of the specialty game market, which excludes the big players, Hasbro and Mattel, and mass-market stores. Kaufeld says the annual sales for these smaller specialty games with 400 to 500 different titles available are estimated at \$200 million to \$350 million annually in the United States.

It's not huge, but it's a healthy market, he says.

"There's a thriving world of specialty games," Kaufeld says. "You've got a lot of parents in their 30s and 40s who say, 'I want to spend time with my children,' and they're finding games are a good way to do that."

But small-game makers shouldn't bet on making a fortune, Kaufeld adds, and they should be prepared to be thrilled if they sell 5,000 copies of a game.