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Couples Massage—You Rub My Back and I'll Rub Yours

By Andrea A. Firth



James Kizziee shows Orinda residents Jennifer and Mike Vigo the techniques of a good massage. Photo A. Firth

A good massage is an exhilarating experience, and who isn't up for a little more excitement in his or her life? We all deserve a good rub down to relax those tense muscles, soothe the aches and pains, and alleviate the stress

that we harbor in our bodies. But time and resources typically prohibit most from the benefits of a rejuvenating massage at the end of each long work week. For those with a partner, Orinda-based massage therapist James Kizziee may

have the answer—couples massage.

A certified massage therapist for over 18 years, Kizziee conducts couples massage sessions teaching clients how to employ his massage techniques on each other. "About 15 years ago, I had a female client who wanted to get her husband a massage for his sore back. She was concerned that he would not be comfortable with a male massage therapist," explains Kizziee. "So I suggested that she let me show her how to do the massage," he adds. Couples massage has been an integral part of Kizziee's massage business ever since.

Kizziee, whose six foot two inch frame and broad muscular physique contrasts with his smooth voice and easy-going manner, provides a good balance of technical training while keeping the couples sessions fun and relaxing. His in-home massage practice, which covers a 200-square mile radius stretching from Sacramento to San Jose and Danville to Pacifica, has been growing consistently among Lamorinda residents.

Orinda natives Mike and Jennifer Vigo, who have been individual massage clients of Kizziee for over five years, recently worked with him on couples massage. "My husband's back always hurts, and I

never felt that I was strong enough to help him out," explained Jennifer, a petite woman, as she followed Kizziee's verbal directions and mimicked the hand strokes he simultaneously used on Mike's back. Although she seemed slightly nervous at the outset, Jennifer was quickly put at ease and became comfortable with the process as Kizziee moved about the table and guided her through the steps of the massage. Mike, this session's beneficiary, said little and may have been so relaxed that he fell asleep.

After the first couples massage session, Kizziee recommends that the newly trained masseuse provide his or her partner with a daily massage for seven days. In the next session the roles are switched and the massage recipient learns to give the massage. He notes that the massage can be whole body or confined to the neck, shoulders, or feet.

Kizziee is quick to point out that there is nothing sexual about his practice of couples massage. However, he does believe that it can enhance relationships. With Valentine's Day coming up, will flowers and chocolates do the trick? Or perhaps you will treat your partner to a soothing massage? Kizziee can be reached at 925.798.8898.



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Diablo Foods and Local Merchants: a Relationship that's here to Stay

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"She's very supportive and unlike other retailers, is ready to work directly with producers and try new things."

Walter mainly sells her products through a network of independent consultants, so she was delighted to work with a business that would allow in-store demonstrations. Diablo Foods is open to new vendors, explained Walter, because of their long experience and deep roots in the community.

Denise O'Keffe - another mother who is balancing life and business - makes Bo's Best Pancakes mix that sells at Diablo Foods. "Diablo was the first retailer to take my mixes," she says, "I live in Lafayette so I naturally went to see them, they were wonderful and for the last seven years have been great partners."

O'Keffe now sells nine different mixes that can be found in about a dozen stores in the Bay Area, and her business continues to grow very steadily.

One of the longest local relationships Diablo Foods established was with the Cake Box Bakery in Lafayette which provides the store with packaged dinner buns. "We sell thousands of them during the holiday season," says Collier, "They have been around for as long

as we have: more than 40 years."

You can also find local products from less than 100 miles away in Diablo's cheese department. Suzanne Koplos is a gourmet and an expert on local cheeses at Diablo Foods. Although there are no cheeses from Contra Costa County, she has explored the riches of Marin and Sonoma counties.

Among her favorite cheeses are the Point Reyes Blue, the truffle goat cheese from Cyprus Grove in Arcata, and the Monterey Jack from Bella Cheese in Sonoma. Diablo even carries a camembert and brie that are made in Marin County by Rouge et Noir French Cheese Company.

Another great local source is in the fish department. Besides the crab, halibut, and sea bass which have all been fished in the area, Diablo Foods carries a local caviar: Tsar Nicoulai. Their eggs that are hand produced at their aquafarm in California's Central Valley where they raise the white sturgeons that are indigenous to the Pacific Northwest. The meat department offers local lamb and poultry, and provides grass-fed hamburger from Holding Farm.

Diablo Foods is now part of the "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" network.

"People want to buy local foods for different reasons," says Collier. "For some, it's because they want to support the local economy, for others it's because they like to know where what they eat comes from. They like the high quality and they want traceability, while others want to minimize the carbon footprint of what they eat."

Cost, however, is not a factor. "Most of the time," says Collier,

"the local producers propose real specialties, creative and high quality products, and their quantities are still small, so they do not have the economy of scale that other nationally distributed brands have."

Nonetheless, she believes that the growing trend is here to stay and with her team she is working on a labeling system that will highlight locally made items.

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