

Rising Loafer Earns Green Awards at All Levels

By Sophie Braccini



Ahmed Shibli and Maria Gastelumendi at the Rising Loafer

Photo Sophie Braccini

When Central Costa County Sanitary District inspectors conduct their yearly inspections of restaurants to ensure that these businesses are complying with their permit requirements, they sometimes notice practices that go beyond the legal demands. When they do, they nominate these businesses to get the Pollution Prevention Award. That's what happened to the Rising Loafer Café in Lafayette, and the small business became the only restaurant in Contra Costa County to earn the 2013 award. Additionally, Cool California, a non-profit organization that recognizes California small businesses that promote climate friendly practices, gave the Lafayette café a small business award, a distinction received by only seven other businesses statewide. And this month Rising Loafer was recognized with Lafayette's Green Award.

Ahmed Shibli and Maria Gastelumendi, Lafayette residents and owners of the restaurant, are proud – for them, it is just a matter of following in the century-old footsteps of their ancestors, and respecting their clients as much as they respect the earth that feeds us.

What were the odds that Shibli and Gastelumendi would ever meet, fall in love and create a restaurant in Lafayette? He came from the Middle East and she came from the Ancash highlands of Peru, both rural regions that value wholesome, homemade cuisine prepared from scratch. They first met at Oakland's Holy Names University; he became a commercial pilot, she graduated from UC Berkeley in economics. They discovered they had common culinary roots, the Mediterranean, and a common ethic of care and respect for the earth. They were married 20 years ago

and opened their first restaurant in Pleasant Hill; then in 2003 they took over the Rising Loafer Café in Lafayette.

"Everything here is about reusing, recycling or repurposing," says Gastelumendi. When a customer does not finish a glass of water, the contents goes into a pitcher that will water the patio planters; on tables, the sugar containers and cups are charming, colorful and mismatched. "They come from different antique or reuse stores," explains Shibli. "We try as much as we can to repurpose things, just as our tables that I made out of old doors."

Everything that cannot be washed and reused in the café is compostable; the napkins, the cups and take-out containers. "For our catering service, we use these baskets to deliver," says Gastelumendi, pointing to wicker baskets of different sizes that hang on the wall of the restaurant. The loaves of bread that are made on site by Shibli himself and are not sold on the day they were made are donated and not thrown away. Rising Loafer is also part of the Solid Waste Authority's pioneering program that allows local restaurants to be part of a large food waste composting program.

"We had help to set up our kitchen and train our employees," says Gastelumendi, "and we also train every new person working here in our ways of not wasting anything. It is really not a big effort, it just takes a bit of care and motivation."

The Central San inspector also noticed the outside container provided by Hanson & Fitch to collect vegetable oil. "We dump all our cooking oil into this container," says Shibli. "Hanson & Fitch picks it up when it is full and converts the oil into biofuel."

Cool California was impressed by the café's recycling practices, but also by the wholesome food that they prepare, the care they take in the selection of their ingredients, and the way Gastelumendi is able to take advantage of the small south-oriented alley behind the restaurant to grow vegetables and fruit trees. "You don't need a lot of space to grow fruits and vegetables," says Gastelumendi who likes to show off her crafty garden. "All you need is big containers, good soil, some sun and attentive care." The fig trees are already growing nicely, the tomatoes just went into the containers, and basil will soon be planted. Once ripe, everything will find its way into the salads and sandwiches, along with the homemade bread.

"We do all this because we love it and because it is our way of life," says Gastelumendi. Rising Loafer is open everyday but Tuesday, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., for breakfast and lunch, and brunch on weekends. It is located at 3643 Mt. Diablo Blvd. (between Trader Joe's and the post office) – just look for the flowering patio.

Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.

business briefs

Walgreens Coming to Lafayette

3614 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Walgreens has started the application process with the City of Lafayette to occupy the spaces that were previously home to Citibank and Mountain Mike's Pizza on Mt. Diablo Boulevard. The opening date has not yet been set.

Massage Envy to Open this Week

558 Center Street, Moraga

(925) 376-3689

A new franchise of the Massage Envy business model opens this week in Moraga's Rheem Shopping Center. A ribbon cutting ceremony is scheduled for 5 to 7 p.m. on May 8 with both the Moraga and Lafayette chambers of commerce.

Goodbye Bo's Barbecue

3422 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette

(925) 283-7133

It was 1999 when Bo McSwine opened his restaurant on Mt. Diablo Boulevard in Lafayette. Bo's is not a place for vegetarians, but, as he says, "Those in the know, know Bo knows barbecue." Pork and beef ribs, brisket, chicken and links, Bo has it all for barbecue fans. What adds to the restaurant's charm is the informal setting and great live entertainment every weekend. So why close a successful business? The end of a lease and a property owner who wants a change. According to a Contra Costa Times article, Tony Lukaszewski, the property owner, said several other restaurants are interested in renting the place. McSwine hopes to open a new location in San Francisco. Barbecue lovers have until the end of July to eat their fill at Bo's.

Honorees at Coldwell Banker Residential in Orinda

5 Moraga Way, Orinda

(925) 253-6311

Laura Abrams has earned status in the Coldwell Banker International President's Elite, and Maureen Wilbur has earned membership in the Coldwell Banker International President's Premier Society. Abrams has been affiliated with Coldwell Banker since 1999 and has lived in Orinda for 40 years. She is co-director of the Friends of the Orinda Theatre, the group that was responsible for saving the art deco theater and supervising its restoration and reopening. She also served as an elected member of the Orinda City Council for 12 years, serving as mayor in 1999 and again in 2003. Abrams may be reached directly at (925) 253-4611 or laura@lauraabrams.com. Wilbur has been with Coldwell Banker Orinda since 2000. Before entering real estate, Wilbur taught high school and middle school math and science for 30 years. Her last 12 years teaching was at Orinda Intermediate School. Wilbur may be reached directly at (925) 253-6311 or Maureen@MaureenWilbur.com.



Laura Abrams



Maureen Wilbur

Moraga Employee of the Month

Carol Schofield of The Saklan School has been named the Moraga Employee of the Month for April by the Moraga Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club of Moraga. Schofield has worked at the school for 16 years, serving as a grade school teacher and as the dean of the lower school. "Carol is a huge asset to The Saklan School and the community," said Peter Metzger, head of school. "Not only is she a superior teacher,



From left: Kevin Reneau, Carol Schofield, Peter Metzger and Nora Avalar. In foreground Schofield's Saklan students.

Photo provided

but she mentors other teachers and her fundraising projects each year for guide dogs are always very successful. Both the children and their parents really love her and appreciate her efforts here at Saklan." Schofield will receive her award and gift cards to Safeway and Home Goods at the Moraga Rotary luncheon on Tuesday, April 29.

News from the three Chambers of Commerce

Lafayette

Chamber Mixer begins at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 14 at Wine Thieves, 3401 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Moraga

The Moraga Community Faire will be held from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, May 10 at the Rheem Shopping Center. Meet Moraga businesses and service groups and enjoy music, kids' activities and a dunk tank. Businesses can still register to participate; the deadline is May 1. Contact the Chamber of Commerce at moragachamber.org.

Orinda

The Orinda Rotary and Orinda Chamber present Orinda Trivia Bee on Friday, April 25 at the Orinda Masonic Lodge, 9 Altarinda Road. Not to BEE missed! Cost: \$360 per team (up to six people per team). Doors open at 5 p.m., dinner is at 6 p.m. and the game is on at 7 p.m. For families, companies, organizations, groups of friends, everyone! Winners take a cash prize for the non-profit of their choice. Cash bar, raffle prizes and instant wine cellar – bring a bottle to donate. Make your reservations at www.orindachamber.org. For more information call Candy Kattenburg at (925) 254-3909 or email president@orindachamber.org.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com



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