

Today: Whole Foods' 5 Percent Day Supports a Local Business

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Hollie Lucas-Alcalay, Chop Chop Go representative Chris Casado, and Andrea Quinn
Photo Lily Dong

Three local small businesses recently competed for a Local Food Makers grant from Whole Foods – the winner was Hollie Lucas-Alcalay, who may soon be able to purchase her dream greenhouse. The owner of Hollie's Homegrown, a home-based herb business in Moraga, will receive 5 percent of the revenue generated on July 2 at Whole Foods in Lafayette.

Also in the competition were Andrea Quinn,

who owns Cake in Lafayette, and Un Kwon, owner of Orinda's Chop Chop Go. Neither Hollie's Homegrown nor Cake products are distributed by Whole Foods; Chop Chop Go gets supplies from the Lafayette food retailer. Whole Foods' team member Jane Shafer says the contest was not about promoting her company. "We want to support local small businesses that are in line with our mission of supplying sustainable food and strengthening communities," she said.

"It is hard to develop a small business and everything can help. And maybe down the road they can become one of our suppliers."

It was the first time Whole Foods opened its grant program to local food producers – usually the proceeds from the "5 percent days" go to non-profits. The East Bay region received 73 entries and the leadership team at each store selected three vendors as finalists. "We had criteria such as size (no more than around \$100,000 per year in gross sales)," said Shafer, "and we looked for local vendors whose products already met our quality standards."

Cake opened in 2012 at 35 Lafayette Circle. Quinn bakes all-organic cupcakes, macarons and beautiful custom cakes. She wanted to win the grant in order to get her organic and non-GMO certification, a process that can be costly for a small business. Chop Chop Go offers a complete meal-planning and shopping service. Kwon would have used the grant to expand her services to more locations and integrate with third-party content providers on her online platform.

The three business owners were given the opportunity to display their products and discuss their businesses in the store for a day. "In order to win, we had to get the most votes on the Whole Foods' voting site," said Lucas-Alcalay. "I asked my friends and clients for their support, but I was not too hopeful." When the results were tabulated, Lucas-Alcalay came out on top.

"I was invited along with winners from the other stores to an information day, meeting Whole Foods buyers and understanding their process to be accredited in order to sell to the stores. It can be an eight to 12 month process."

Currently Lucas-Alcalay sells her herbs, teas, culinary salts, infused olive oils, bath salts and salves at farmers' markets and the Renegade Craft Fair. "Selling directly makes sense to me right now," she said, "but down the road as volume grows it might make sense to sell wholesale."

Her immediate goal is to acquire a Monticello greenhouse. "The most interesting herbs you grow from seeds," she said. "It is cost effective and will allow me to grow." Her greenhouse of choice is solar powered and has an efficient watering system. "Growing seeds is like baking," she said. "You need to constantly keep an eye on your temperature and humidity levels. Having this greenhouse in my garden will allow me to grow my seeds and also take care of my two kids, not to mention run a business." Hollie's Homegrown is online at www.hollieshomegrown.com and www.Etsy.com.

For more information about Cake and Chop Chop Go, visit their websites: www.cake-lafayette.com and www.chopchopgo.com.

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

The Mechanic: New Name and New Angle for a Seasoned Business

3328 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette
(925) 283-5212, <http://themechaniclafayette.com>



Leola the cow in front of The Mechanic in Lafayette.
Photo provided by the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce

René Aguirre recently changed the name of his auto repair business from Urban Suburban to The Mechanic. "I changed the name because people had misconceptions about my business," says Aguirre, who opened his Lafayette shop in 1996. "We always catered to general automotive and foreign cars, but as the market changed, the make-up of our clients has changed also and we wanted our name to reflect this." Aguirre says he is expanding his ability to service hybrid and electric cars. But not all traditions were abandoned when the name changed. Aguirre, a Texan, would not get rid of Leola, the beautiful cow that stands in front of the store. "It was more of a joke at first," he acknowledges, "but over the years Leola has become a welcoming and familiar sign for our clients."

Diablo Magazine's "Best of the East Bay 2014" Picks in Lamorinda

(All are located in Lafayette except where noted)

Glamorous Boutique – 1048 Brown Ave., (925) 285-6096, www.glamour4me.com

Venture Quality Goods – 3571 Mt. Diablo Blvd., (925) 385-0259, www.venturegoods.com

J. Colleen Boutique – 261 Lafayette Circle, (925) 258-0300, www.jcolleen.com

Lafayette Academy – 3400 Mt. Diablo Blvd., (925) 284-1644; and 1400 Moraga Way, Moraga, (925) 376-0747; www.lafayetteacademy.com

Lavande Spa and Boutique – 3589 Mt. Diablo Blvd., (925) 299-8877, www.lavandenailspa.com

Nextbarre – 3471 Mt. Diablo Blvd., (925) 284-5400, www.nextbarre.com

Powell's Sweet Shop – 3591 Mt. Diablo Blvd., (925) 299-9866, www.powellss.com

Lafayette Car Wash – 3319 Mt. Diablo Blvd., (925) 283-1190, www.lafayettecarwash.com

Orchard Nursery – 4010 Mt. Diablo Blvd., (925) 284-4474, www.orchardnursery.com

Roam Artisan Burgers – 23 Lafayette Circle, (925) 385-0798, www.roamburgers.com

Patxi's – 3577 Mt. Diablo Blvd., (925) 299-0700, www.patxispizza.com

Millie's Kitchen – 1018 Oak Hill Road, (925) 283-2397

Uncle Yu's – 999 Oak Hill Road, Ste. 3, (925) 283-1688, www.uncleyus.com

Chevalier – 960 Moraga Road, (925) 385-0793, www.chevalierrestaurant.com

Swad – 3602 Mt. Diablo Blvd., (925) 962-9575, www.theswadindia.com

El Charro – 3339 Mt. Diablo Blvd., (925) 283-2345, www.elcharro1947.com

The Cooperage American Grille – 32 Lafayette Circle, (925) 298-5915, www.thecooperagelafayette.com

Postino – 3565 Mt. Diablo Blvd., (925) 299-8700, www.postinorestaurant.com

Moraga Employee of the Month



From left: Kevin Reneau, Debra Flynn, Debra Shin and Frank May
Photo provided

Debra Flynn, customer service manager at Moraga Cleaners and Laundry, was recently named the Moraga Employee of the Month for June, as announced by the Moraga Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club of Moraga. Flynn, who has worked at the store for more than 30 years, runs the front counter and provides service to hundreds of customers. "Debra is just a great employee," said owner Debra Shin. "It starts with her wonderful attitude. She always goes over and beyond the call of duty for our customers and they all love her because of how friendly and personable she is." Flynn will be presented with her award and gift cards to Safeway and Pennini's at the Moraga Rotary luncheon on July 15.

Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage 5 Moraga Way, Orinda (925) 253-4600

Lana Fitzpatrick of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage's Orinda office has earned status in the Coldwell Banker International President's Elite, a prestigious honor bestowed upon the top Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage sales associates worldwide. Since Fitzpatrick joined Coldwell Banker in 2007 she has been a top agent in the Lamorinda area. She lives in Moraga, where she is actively involved in her children's schools and athletic programs. This year she is the premier sponsor of the Moraga Baseball Association, Moraga Ranch Swim Club and the OMPA.



Lana Fitzpatrick
Photo provided

Business Anniversary

Piccolo Napoli's First Anniversary 2 Orinda Theatre Square #144, Orinda (925) 253-1225, www.piccolo-napoli.com

Piccolo Napoli, the Italian restaurant and pizzeria in Theatre Square, is celebrating its one year anniversary this summer and will be offering special menu items, new pizza combinations, and a refreshing white wine Sangria to commemorate this milestone. The family-friendly restaurant specializes in Neapolitan thin-crust pizza, pastas with a variety of house made sauces, fresh salads, soups and daily specials, including the popular Eggplant Parmesan and Creamy Pesto Fettuccine. There are also gluten free pizzas and pastas available. Piccolo Napoli now offers delivery in Orinda daily from 5 to 8 p.m., with catering available.

News from the three Chambers of Commerce

Chamber Mega-Mixer July 9

Picnic at the Grove with Cal Shakes, 100 Shakespeare Way in Orinda from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Appetizers provided by local restaurants, raffle prizes, networking with members of the chambers of commerce of Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda and surrounding areas. Transportation will be available from Wilder. Discounted pre-sale tickets for Cal Shakes production of "The Comedy of Errors" will be available for purchase.

Lafayette

Ribbon cutting for the new Lafayette business Gem Lust, at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, July 15, 3529 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Moraga

The 3rd annual Moraga Chamber Golf Tournament will be played on Monday, July 14. This event is the chamber's largest fundraising event of the year. Proceeds support the chamber's many community and business-based programs. The cost is \$175 per player and includes golf, BBQ lunch, prizes, dinner, refreshments, and raffle. For more information or to sign up, visit www.moragachamber.org.

Celebrating an Anniversary?

If your business is celebrating a significant anniversary (5, 10, 20 years or more ...) send us a photo of your business, the owner(s) or the staff with specific information about your business and what you're celebrating, and we'll include it in an upcoming issue.

Supervisors Nix Sales Tax Hike

Poll shows voter support for education, fire and emergency services

By Nick Marnell

A measure to increase the Contra Costa County sales tax will not appear on the November ballot. Based on the results of a poll conducted by Oakland-based EMC Research, county voters would be in favor of using proceeds from a sales tax to augment fire and emergency response and to reopen fire stations, but were not likely to pass the countywide sales tax increase itself.

"Passing a tax would be challenging," said EMC vice president Tom Patras, who presented the poll results to the Board of Supervisors on June 24. He explained that if the election were held today, there was a 49 percent chance for a half-cent sales tax increase to pass and a 54 percent chance for voters to pass a quarter-cent increase. Passage of a general sales tax requires a simple majority.

In an open ended question posed by the research company, voters picked education as the most important problem facing the county. But in a question on the passage of a measure that would use sales tax revenue for dedicated funding rather than going into the general fund, voters responded 65 percent in favor of implementing a sales tax specifically for funding fire service, and 63 percent in

favor of both maintaining emergency medical service and funding emergency medical response. Categories from which the 806 polled voters chose included fire and emergency medical response, more police officers, road repair, prosecution of criminals, increased hours for libraries and funding for Doctors Medical Center San Pablo; education was not listed as a selection. A dedicated sales tax re-

quires a two-thirds majority for passage.

"I'm not happy, but we need to be realistic about these results," said Supervisor John Gioia. "Generally, what you see in a poll on tax revenue erodes over time. It takes a very expensive campaign to hold your support." The board unanimously passed a motion to not place the sales tax increase on the November ballot.