

Published July 2nd, 2014

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, macaroons 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.cakelafayette.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.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA