

Business

# Taking Root

By Sophie Braccini



Cindy Kastner prepares meals in the Back to the Table production kitchen. Photo provided

Cindy Kastner wants to help people obtain a healthy lifestyle through food and expand her reach to people who particularly need a healthy diet, those recovering from heart surgery or cancer. In July she launched Taking Root – a dedicated cooking and delivery service of plant-based meals in Lafayette. The businesswoman, who is both a health coach and passionate cook, makes delicious and healthy combinations of entrees and sides that are good for everybody. Kastner also works with people who have special gluten-free, salt-free or oil-free dietary needs.

“I first discovered the benefits of eating organics in a nutrition class during my college years,” remembers Kastner. “I was too far along in my studies to switch to becoming a nutritionist, but it made me change the way I ate.” This translated into a whole organic pantry as she raised three children in Lafayette. “People would come to my house and ask me why everything was organic in my kitchen,” she remembers with a smile.

When her children left the house for college, Kastner decided to further her understanding of food and health. She took a year-long training at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition and became a certified holistic health coach. “At the beginning of the class we were told that it would change our lives,” she remembers. “I was somewhat doubtful, but it did. When I came

out of it I was a completely different person.” During the class Kastner learned about the benefits of different diets including the plant-based diet coming out of “The China Study” research, that claims that most, if not all, of the degenerative diseases that afflict us can be controlled, or even reversed, by rejecting our present menu of animal-based and processed foods.

Kastner first stopped eating dairy, then all animal products. But she is not dogmatic. “I learned at the Institute that everyone has their own diet and figures out what is good for themselves,” she adds. “As long as they are unprocessed, whole foods, with good quality, you’re on the right track.”

Kastner started her practice as a health coach, primarily supporting and guiding clients toward their nutrition goals. But people started asking her to cook for them. She had always loved to cook, collecting hundreds of recipes, and took it to the next level with a professional plant-based culinary training with the Rouxbe Cooking School. “My practice started evolving from people’s requests, and now, with this new business, I feel that I am at the right place, I have taken root and I am growing,” she adds with a warm smile.

Paula Roemer has been Kastner’s client for some time. The Walnut Creek dentist got Kastner’s name from her chiropractor. “What I like about Cindy (Kastner) is that

she cooks exactly the way I would,” comments the busy mother of four. “She puts so much love into her meal preparation.” Roemer thinks using all organic ingredients is a plus, but what she likes best, besides the convenience, is the freshness, creativity and taste of the meals she buys for her family. “I started eating a plant-based diet four years ago for health reasons, and also for the impact on the environment,” she says, “but I am not rigid about it; I don’t want to offend family and friends when we are invited.” Her children feel the same: they love the plant-based food, but also get other types of food outside the house. Taking Root allows them to get the quality of food they want, without sweating it.

The business model is pretty simple. Each Wednesday a new menu comes out, which includes five entrées and five sides. Clients have until Friday to place an order. They either order six, eight or 12 meals, or à la carte. “If you order six meals you can mix and match, depending if you want to feed six people for one day, or two for three days,” explains Kastner. She goes shopping for her organic ingredients on Mondays at the Berkeley Bowl, Diablo Foods or Whole Foods. She takes everything to the Lafayette production kitchen “Back to the Table” and prepares all the meals for Tuesday deliveries. All orders are contained in large mason jars.

An example of an entrée would be a barbecue tempeh with slaw and ranch dressing, or a rice pilaf with carrots and crunchy pasta; sides can include a quinoa salad with sugar snap peas, scallions and mint, or a lentil salad with roasted beets. Also on the menu is Kastner’s anytime bar made with nuts, dried fruits and maple syrup.

Kastner feels she also has a mission to support people who are in recovery. “I want people who are going into surgery, heart patients, cancer patients, to be able to feed themselves in a way that’s good for them,” she says. For more information and to order online, visit [www.takingrootsf.com](http://www.takingrootsf.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

### Ariel Skin Care

346 Rheem Blvd, Ste 205 C Moraga

[www.moragafacials.com](http://www.moragafacials.com), (925) 388-6021, [arielmariekey@gmail.com](mailto:arielmariekey@gmail.com)

Ariel Marie Key is a clinical esthetician and Skin Script specialist who recently opened a new salon in Moraga on Rheem Boulevard, across from Chef Chao and 24 Hour Fitness. Key says that there are many things that can go wrong on the road to perfect skin. “Everyone has their own recipe of ingredients that their skin needs to be as strong and healthy as it can be,” she says. “For optimal skin results I focus on finding the right combination of ingredients for every individual.” She believes that with a little know-how,



Ariel Marie Key of Ariel Skin Care

Photo provided

and gentler natural treatments, her clients can get the same skin care results as lasers, fillers and deep peels. “Regular gentle treatments improve most conditions like acne, rosacea, aging, dryness and pigmentation (dark spots). And not only are these conditions improved with regular use of enzymes, alpha hydroxy acids (in their natural state), microdermabrasion and smart home-care, but we can get results that are just as dramatic as lasers,” she firmly believes. Key says that she was raised by a quantum physicist and did equations in her kitchen in first grade. After she ran away with the circus and danced tango all over the country she returned to her scientific roots and has done nothing but study the skin and what we can actually do to improve it without looking unnatural. Key’s motto: “Love the skin you’re in!”

### New Dance Class Opportunities with Justin Cole

(510) 725-2661, [www.lilj5678.com](http://www.lilj5678.com)

Justin Cole, dance instructor, with young students. Photo Cindy Cattell

Justin Cole, who has taught dance at the California Academy of Performing Arts in Moraga for 15 years, has branched out on his own. He is teaching classes independently at Star Pilates and Fitness in Moraga and at the Dance and Movement Center for adults in Lafayette. The Moraga classes are for children ages 4 to 13 and include techniques such as funky jazz/hip-hop or rhythmic tap. The adult classes in Lafayette focus on hip-hop.

### Lace and Bustle

3569 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite E

[www.LaceandBustle.com](http://www.LaceandBustle.com), (925) 298-4100

An intimate, bridal boutique, Lace and Bustle, is opening in Lafayette beginning the weekend of Aug. 28-31 and the boutique has started booking appointments. The boutique’s mission is to make each bride feel as special as she is and make her wedding dress experience a memorable moment she will look back on fondly for years to come. Owner Victoria Hansen was a fashion buyer when she envisioned bringing her passion for timeless beauty and heirlooms along with her eye for assorting collections into an intimate bridal boutique. Lace and Bustle carries an exquisite selection of bridal gowns and unique accessories. The Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting will be at 5 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 27. Lace and Bustle will host a Ramona Keveza trunk show Sept. 25-27.

### Chastain Named Moraga Employee of the Month for July

Carter Chastain, a computer technician at Neighborhood Computers, has been named the Moraga Employee of the Month for July. Chastain, who has been solving IT issues and fixing computer problems for Moraga citizens and businesses for the past three years, has certifications in Windows 7 and 8 and also works on Mac computers as needed. “Carter provides really fine customer service to local residents and businesses,” said store owner Grant Stubblefield. “His attention to detail makes him stand apart as a technician and he also can provide assistance in person or via remote IT services.” The Moraga Rotary and Chamber of Commerce presented Chastain with a gift card to Safeway as well as a gift card to Graze restaurant in Moraga on Aug. 18.

### Lafayette One of the 100 Best Cities for Women Entrepreneurs in the Country

GoodCall data center measured which American cities were most supportive for women as entrepreneurs. The city of Lafayette ranked 77 out of the thousands that were evaluated. Alpharetta, Ga., was ranked No. 1. Walnut Creek ranked fourth. Among the elements taken into consideration: percentage of female education attainment, unemployment rate, and percentage of women-owned businesses. To see the complete study, visit <http://www.goodcall.com/data-center/2015s-best-cities-for-women-entrepreneurs/>.

### News from the Three Chambers of Commerce

#### Lafayette

Ribbon Cutting at Earth and Sea Yoga at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 2 at 3400 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

#### Moraga

The 4th Annual Golf & Tennis Tournament will take place on Monday, Sept. 21, at the Moraga Country Club. For golfers, the cost is \$175 per player, with play beginning at noon, and for tennis players, the cost is \$75 per player, with play beginning at 1 p.m. For golf and tennis registrants, dinner, refreshments and prizes are included. Dinner only (non-players) is also available for \$40 per person, beginning at 4:30 p.m. Registration forms are available at the Chamber’s website. For more information, contact Kathe Nelson at (925) 323-6524 or [kathe@moragachamber.org](mailto:kathe@moragachamber.org).

#### Orinda

Orinda Classic Car Show weekend Sept. 11-12 (see info on page Bx).



## Hundreds of Bay Area families choose Home Care Assistance.

Trust our award-winning care to suit your family's needs. We're the best!

**24/7 Live-In Care Specialists.** We offer around-the-clock care for a reasonable price despite recent overtime laws.

**Brain Health Experts.** We are the only home care agency that offers Cognitive Therapeutics, a research-backed activities program that promotes brain health and vitality in our clients.

**Lamorinda's Best Caregivers.** Each has at least 2 years experience and undergoes extensive training and screening, including a DOJ background check, drug test and proprietary psychological exam designed to test for honesty and conscientiousness.

**Meet Jill.** Jill Cabeceiras is the client care manager for the East Bay. She has been working with older adults for more than ten years and is an expert on managing care within the home. Let Jill help you and your family!



Call Jill to schedule your free consultation today!  
925-820-8390 • [HomeCareAssistance.com](http://HomeCareAssistance.com)  
190-G Alamo Plaza, Alamo, CA 94507

If you have a business brief to share, please contact Sophie Braccini at [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)