

Specialty Greens – Fresh Hydroponic Veggies for Delivery

By Sophie Braccini



Patty Phaneuf grows hydroponic vegetables

Photo Sophie Braccini

What is a speech therapist doing commercially growing vegetables under fluorescent lights? It might sound odd, but for Patty Phaneuf, it is the result of a life-long passion for vegetable gardening and finding the most sustainable way to grow them commercially, limiting the impact on water supply and agricultural land. "Hydroponics is the way of the future," says the Lafayette resident who decided to start her own business, Specialty Greens, once her kids went to college.

"I am a huge proponent of healthy

living, consuming lots of highly nutritious greens, and I wanted to be part of the practical solution," says Phaneuf. "I provide high quality greens, chard, spinach, kale, micro greens, gourmet lettuces and herbs that are fresh and clean."

Hydroponics, or growing vegetables without soil, is a technique that has been around for hundreds of years and has many advantages. No dirt required – plants grow by being directly fed the nutrients and minerals that would be otherwise extracted through water in the soil. Hydroponics supporters claim

that the technique requires only 20 percent of the surface and as little as one-twentieth of the amount of water regular agriculture needs to produce the same amount of food.

"I have an area of about 1,500 square feet indoors for my planting," explains the hydroponics farmer. "With the fluorescent lights, it allows me to grow lots of plants in record time." Phaneuf explains that she completely controls the cleanliness of her production, and she does not have to use pesticides to keep her plants pest free. "You can eat them fresh out of the bag," she says. The vegetables and herbs are fed with nutrients that are provided by Dyna-Gro, a fertilizer producer that also offers a line of nutrients for hydroponics agriculture.

Phaneuf started to work on her project a year ago; it took that full year of research and investment to start selling commercially. Now she delivers to businesses in Lamorinda and adjacent Bay Area cities free of charge, she is working on a home delivery system, and is looking for retail partners. She also sells hydroponic systems for those who want to grow vegetables in their own homes.

For more information, visit www.specialtygreens.com.

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

SpotDining Mixes Local Philanthropy and Online Deals

By Sophie Braccini

Three years ago, a group of friends led by Lafayette resident Wymond Choy started brainstorming an online system for local dining deals that would also support local charities. Since each friend had a full time job it took a little longer than expected, but at the beginning of October they launched SpotDining.com, a service that lets you check for available deals at local restaurants before you head out the door. The service is free for restaurants and the two dollars that users pay to secure the deal goes to a charity of their choice.

"We were frustrated by the available online services like Groupon that were offering deals with an expiration date," explains Nicholas Chang, the marketing brain of the team. "This may be good for promoting a business, but for users, who are often procrastinators, it does not make a lot of sense. Our service is simpler. If you want to have dinner at a Lamorinda restaurant, you go online to SpotDining.com and see what the current deals are, and you go." He adds that the offers found on SpotDining are

exclusive, posted in real time by the restaurants and can change every day. "The types of deals on SpotDining are unlimited: a free entrée, a dollars-off discount, a prix fix meal, or a special just for the day," he says.

Chang adds there are important benefits for the restaurants. "We believe that they will take advantage of our service to push hours when they have less clients, or to push products that are in season for a short period of time, like crab," he says. "On other online coupon sites they sell their service with a discount, but a percentage goes to the coupon organization, but not with us," he adds. "For now, we are not taking any salary and our system does not cost much to operate. Our end game is to get compensation later, once we've proven ourselves and can offer additional services."

Since its launch, SpotDining is expanding its range of restaurants. For more information and deals, visit www.spotdining.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

Lafayette Resident Receives ECHO Award

The East Bay chapter of Commercial Real Estate Women named Lafayette resident Patricia Curtin of Wendel, Rosen, Black & Dean LLP as one of the winners of the ECHO Awards at their third annual Honors and Ovations award ceremony Oct. 24 in Walnut Creek. These awards recognized four winners who fulfilled the mission of CREW by demonstrating a commitment to advancing women in commercial real estate. "The commercial real estate profession is male dominated and we want to showcase the incredible deals, companies and professional women who demonstrate outstanding success and pave a way for unlimited opportunities for future generations of men and women in this industry," said Teresa Goodwin, chapter president of East Bay CREW and regional director of HPA Architecture. Mike Consol, editor for the Institutional Real Estate Letter and Tillie Ross, vice president for Old Republic Title Company, served as co-host and emcee of the event. Curtin was named Sustained Leader in Commercial Real Estate, an award honoring women with more than 10 years of experience in the field of commercial real estate who have made a significant contribution to the field, while also demonstrating their leadership in their field and community.

News from the three Chambers of Commerce

Lafayette

Ribbon Cutting at the offices of Cherie Campbell-French, LMFT & Adrienne Casadaban, Ph.D. at 5 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 7 at 110 Lafayette Circle.

Monthly mixer at Alta Bates Summit Women's Health Center at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 13 at 3595 Mt Diablo Blvd., Suite #350 (on the third floor of the building of the Lafayette Mercantile).

Ribbon Cutting at Lafayette Fashionista at 5 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 14 at 1020 Brown Avenue, Suite F.

Ribbon Cutting for the new Lafayette Art Gallery at 5 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 20 at 3420 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Suite A.

Moraga

At the beginning of October, the Chamber unveiled the new version of the ShopMoragaFirst.com pages within the chamber's main website. "We wanted to give our members the ability to further promote their business offerings to the entire community," said Executive Director Kathe Nelson. "We have accomplished this through many improvements on the ShopMoragaFirst.com business directory. Now businesses can promote their offerings free with the addition of expanded listings, social networking links, searchable keywords and business descriptions, and SEO (Search Engine Optimization)."

Save the dates: Nov. 19 Mixer at the Barn, hosted by Canyon Construction and Dec. 10 Holiday Party hosted by Moraga Royale.

Orinda

Save the date for the 12th annual holiday party on Dec. 5 at the Hilton House. The Chamber party is held every year on the first Thursday of December. Everything will be on sale from 5 to 9 p.m. Free gift wrap and refreshments will be available, and a lot of fun, with music, too.



Preview of the California Independent Film Festival at the recent Tri-Chamber Mixer at the Orinda Theatre. From left, Lafayette Chamber's executive director Jay Lifson, Moraga Chamber's executive director Kathe Nelson, and Orinda Chamber's executive director Candy Kattenburg and president Sylvia Jorgensen.

Photo Walter Nelson

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

All Raingutter Systems

925-381-7620 Serving Contra Costa & Surrounding Areas

Over 20 yrs Experience
Local Family Owned

Seamless Gutters • Roofs • Flashing • Dry Rot

Lic #793315

New Installations Repairs-Cleaning Dry Rot Gutter Screens with Micro Mesh

We Do It All
We Do It Right!

Free Estimates - Call 925-381-7620
Licensed-Bonded-Insured

Orinda Motors

Your affordable one-stop solution for service you can trust!

ASE Master Technicians that have specific experience with the vehicles you drive, Domestic, European & Asian.

We can perform required maintenance while your vehicle is still under factory warranty.

We work hard to make your service experience easy and painless.

We offer fast & convenient service that you can trust!

Only Diamond Certified auto repair facility in the whole Lamorinda area.

Use a local company that supports our community!

925-254-2012

Make an appointment on line! www.orindamotors.com

QUALITY - VALUE - TRUST

Orinda Motors 63 Orinda Way, Orinda, Ca., 94563