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Discover tea and treasures

By Cara Brady - Vernon Morning Star - March 19, 2008

A good cup of tea is hard to find. Tatiyanna Kolesnichenko knows. She's taken her search around the world, including living for four years in China and now she's started her own business, Tillicum Valley Tea Company.

"I wanted to bring the amazing teas I have tasted to Canada. There is a lot of interest in tea as a healthy and tasty drink. I got the ingredients together, I use local ingredients when I can, and made some blends for people to sample," she said.

"Tea is like fine wine, it is about sight and smell as well as taste."

Her family and friends, including the Russian Ladies' Tea Group, were happy to help.

"The tea blends are all so delicious, I want to try them in baking and cooking and making sachets," said Russian Ladies' Tea Group member Tanya Lutsenko.

Tea is not just for the ladies — Lutsenko's husband is a contractor and he takes a thermos of Classic Monk's Blend to work with him while Kolesnichenko's husband's favourite is Spiced Chai.

She notices many men of all ages taking an interest in tea when she goes to fairs and sales.

"I like to see people appreciating tea. My mind is always rolling with ideas about teas."

Her teas come from India, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Egypt and China and she creates the blends which include black, green and herbal teas. She adds the ingredients, including Okanagan fruit, and names the teas. One of the local favourites is Isabella's Estate, a fruit tea named for one of her twin daughters who almost died at birth.

As the busy mother of four children, ages three and five and the 19-month-old twins, she hesitated about turning her passion into a business. She credits her nanny with nudging her to make a decision to start by saying, "Why don't you do it today?"

That was last fall and she did.

"Whatever you have in your hand, your vision, your dream, is a gift and you can work with it. Don't look for some obscure idea, work with what you love," said Kolesnichenko. "You can use the talents you have, what holds you back is confidence."

Her advice on making the perfect cup of tea is to make it perfect for the drinker. Warm the pot before or not, and use boiling water for black teas and steep for three to six minutes; water that has boiled and cooled slightly for green tea and steep three minutes; and boiling water and steep five minutes for herbal

tea. Add sugar, honey or milk as desired. Keep it warm with a tea cozy. Iced tea is made double strength and poured over ice cubes. Herbal teas are good for children and make healthy frozen treats. One of her specialty teas is hand-woven Trinity Flower Burst Chinese tea which blossoms from a small ball into a jasmine tea.

Kolesnichenko named her company for Tillicum Valley because she grew up skiing in the valley and her family's new home will overlook the Tillicum Valley.

The Tillicum Valley Tea Company will be at Shoparama but Kolesnichenko will not. She will be on a personal humanitarian mission to help an orphanage and leprosy colony in China. Her booth will be tended by her aunt and tea mentor, Antonida Kroeker.

"She can definitely advise and give people information about any tea and brewing methods. I credit some of my passion inherited from her, as our family comes from at least four generations, all living, as serious tea affectionaires," she said.

"Shoparama is such a good community event. The people there are so creative."

Tillicum Valley Tea is available locally at Butcher Boys, Buy Low, Quality Greens, Polson Super A Foods and Poohs and Beans Sweet Shoppe and will be served and for sale at The Cracked Pot Coffee Emporium.

Shoparama features a variety of crafters, entrepreneurs and home-businesses.

Shoparama, hosted by the Vernon Girls Trumpet Band, takes place March 28 from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and March 29 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Vernon Recreation Centre auditorium.

There will be entertainment, door prizes and a concession. The Spring Bunny will bring treats for the children. Admission is free but donations to the Food Bank are encouraged.

For more information call 542-5983 or e-mail to ingridbaron3@shaw.ca.

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