

People & Places

Business is slow at snail farm

Charity Anais West brings heliciculture to California with her EscarGrow Farms

By JULIA HOLLISTER
For the Capital Press

EUREKA, Calif. — Business is slow for entrepreneur Charity Anais West, but she isn't surprised.

She owns and operates EscarGrow Farms, one of the only snail farms in the nation.

"I grew up in Atascadero (San Luis Obispo County), smack in the middle of three girls," she said. "I went to Cal Poly and received a bachelor's degree in journalism."

She worked as a television news producer in Santa Maria for three years and returned to Cal Poly to get a certificate in teaching English as a second language.

Her plan was to travel the world.

She worked at a restaurant in Paso Robles known for its wine program and fell in love with wine, moved to New Zealand for four months to work at a winery and then relocated to San Francisco.

"I was naive enough about what it meant to be a tiny fish in a very big ocean and decided to become a sommelier," she said. "I studied for a passed my intro and certified 'somm' exams, through the Court of Master Sommeliers and the advanced certificate."

Her love for travel remained, and over the next few years she kept going back to France — Burgundy in particular — because of the incredible vineyards.

"This is where the snail idea came," she said.

(Jeopardy question: Heliciculture. Answer: What are snail farm operations?)



Courtesy of EscarGrow Farms

Charity Anais West, owner of EscarGrow Farms in Eureka, Calif., raises snails and their caviar.

After several trips to Burgundy, and eating escargot for practically every meal, she said she would always return to the U.S. to another "chewy, muddy-flavored" dish of snails drowned in butter, garlic and parsley.

She did a little research, read a book by Frenchman Francois Picart titled "Escargots from Your Garden to Your Table" and learned there was no sizable snail industry in the U.S.

She decided to start a snail farm.

Anais West works exclusively with the Petit Gris, or "little gray" snails. They are often referred to as the "common brown garden snail."

"My first snails came from my mom's garden," she said. "But now I forage for them because they are a local pest, and I raise them in a low hoop house."

It takes about a year for them to reach market size.



Courtesy of EscarGrow Farms

Charity Anais West is owner and CEO of EscarGrow Farms in Eureka, Calif. It is one of the few escargot operations in the nation.

She raises several thousand at a time.

"I'm trying to speed up the process based on what I feed them. I feed them fresh,

organic greens and fruit," she said. "They love cucumber."

They also get non-GMO organic cornmeal, wheat bran and crushed oyster shells that build strong snail shells, she said.

She sells snails by the pound, but only in California. The company is limited by its invasive species permit and does not ship outside the state.

Anais West said the operation is small now because, luckily, snails don't take up a lot of room. She utilizes a certain method to maximize space.

"Caviar" — snail eggs — have long been a popular item at European bistros. Now they are becoming a hot item at many high-end San Francisco restaurants.

Snails lay the eggs in the soil, and they have an earthy flavor, like fresh green onions.

Matthew Dolan, chef



Western Innovator

Charity Anais West

Hometown: Eureka, Calif.

Occupation: Owner and CEO of EscarGrow Farms

Quote: "I want to make people excited, bring them the prospect of a new experience, excite them by the possibility of falling in love with a new flavor."

at San Francisco's 25 Lusk, said his customers are discovering the exotic delicacy.

"Even those put off by the notion at first glance have enjoyed the subtle, mushroom and pine flavors of her (EscarGrow Farms) fresh eggs — unpasteurized so the flavor is pure and amazing," he said. "I was surprised and impressed by such an undertaking, and as escargots themselves are lovely, I'm much more enamored with their caviar."

He said the quality of her escargot caviar is "better than any other that I've tried, so I wish her well and selfishly hope that her production flourishes so I will have regular access."

Anais West said her family and friends were not surprised when she announced she was going to start a snail farm.

"I don't think much I do anymore can surprise them," she said. "From acquaintances and others in the industry, it's all been quite positive. Everyone seems to think I'm onto something."

"I sure hope I am."

Whole Foods executive: No tattoo shops planned for new chain yet

By CANDICE CHOI
AP Food Industry Writer

NEW YORK — Whole Foods is prepping for the launch of its hipster new grocery chain. But shoppers won't be able to get a tattoo with their cheese just yet.

The company says its "365" chain will have a minimalist layout, affordable prices and third-party vendors who set up shop inside the stores. That generated fanfare earlier this year when Bloomberg noted the chain's website said the vendors might include sellers of body care products, record shops and even tattoo parlors.

But Jeff Turnas, president of 365 at Whole Foods, said in an interview this week that there are no plans for tattoo parlors to date, and that he doubts that there will be. He said the example was given to illustrate that 365's partners could include any number of possibilities.

"I think the point of it is that it's going to be diverse — it's not going to be just food," he said.

For instance, Turnas noted a pet grooming service that uses organic shampoos has expressed interest in being a partner.

Still, Turnas said the

press coverage about the potential tattoo parlors sparked genuine excitement among his employees, who started asking if they would be able to use their employee discounts for tattoos. Even if a tattoo parlor isn't likely, Turnas said the idea reflects the culture of Whole Foods employees.

"I would say 75 percent of our team members have tattoos," he said of the team working on the 365 chain.

That includes Turnas, 44, who has a tattoo on his leg is of a Grateful Dead bear with a lacrosse stick, a memory of his time as a lacrosse player at Michigan State University.

The offshoot chain by Whole Foods comes as sales growth has slowed at the company's flagship stores, which are being pressured by traditional supermarkets with expanded organic selections.

Whole Foods Market Inc., which has more than 430 locations, says it still sees potential to expand to 1,200 locations in the U.S.

Some analysts question whether the offshoot chain will cannibalize sales from Whole Foods stores. But the Austin, Texas, company says 365 will help it reach new customers, particularly

those who want more affordable prices or are looking for a quicker shopping experience.

Turnas noted that 365 stores won't have meat or seafood counters, and described it as Whole Foods' "younger sister, a little scrappy."

The first 365 store is slated to open in Los Angeles on May 25; its third-party vendor will be an outpost of a New York vegan eatery. Two more locations are slated for Lake Oswego, Oregon, and Bellevue, Washington this year, and 10 additional stores are slated for 2017.

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To submit an event go to the Community Events calendar on the home page of our website at www.capitalpress.com and click on "Submit an Event." Calendar items can also be mailed to Capital Press, 1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem, OR 97301.

Saturday, May 7
Reducing Fire Risk in the Wildland-Urban Interface, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m., University of Idaho Extension office, Orofino, Idaho

Thursday, May 12
Washington FFA Convention, Washington State University, Pullman

Friday, May 13
Washington FFA Convention, Washington State University, Pullman

Saturday, May 14
Reducing Fire Risk in the Wildland-Urban Interface, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Kamiah Volunteer Fire Department, Kamiah, Idaho

Washington FFA Convention, Washington State University, Pullman Washington FFA Convention

Saturday, May 21
2016 Goat Academy, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. A full day of classes followed by an auction on May 22. Camping available. Half Creek Farm, Gold-

endale, Wash. www.columbiabasin-goatguild.org

Sunday, May 22
Oregon Cattlemen's Association's Midyear 2016, 1-9 p.m., Sunriver Resort, 17600 Center Drive, Sunriver, Ore. The event will host Ethan Lane, executive director of the Public Lands Council. www.orcattle.com

Monday, May 23
Oregon Cattlemen's Association's Midyear 2016, 8 a.m.-9 p.m., Sunriver Resort, 17600 Center Drive, Sunriver, Ore. The event will host Ethan Lane, executive director of the Public Lands Council. www.orcattle.com

Tuesday, May 24
Oregon Cattlemen's Association's Midyear 2016, 8 a.m.-1 p.m., Sunriver Resort, 17600 Center Drive, Sunriver, Ore. The event will also host Ethan Lane, executive director of the Public Lands Council. www.orcattle.com

Wednesday, May 25
Noxious Weed Control Workshop, 6-8 p.m., OSU Extension Auditorium, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point, Ore. (541) 776-7371, Rachel.werling@oregonstate.edu

Saturday, May 28
Alpaca Shearing Day & Sale, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Alpacas of Oregon,

21345 SW Aebischer Road, Sherwood, Ore. Visitors can chat with four long-time livestock breeders who've raised llamas, horses, sheep, and goats. 503-348-6954

Western States Dorper Association Show and Sale, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Chico State University Farm, 311 Nicholas C. Schoute Lane, Chico, Calif. Cost: Free http://wsdorpers.com/2016_wsda_show_and_sale_info

Sunday, May 29
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Friday, June 3
Citizen Fire Academy Meet and Greet, 5-8 p.m., OSU Extension Auditorium, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point, Ore. The Citizen Fire Academy statewide program is for proactive forest landowners, concerned residents in fire-prone communities and the public. Learn how to cre-

ate safe, more fire-resilient homes through online sessions, field trips and by working on a personalized wildfire preparedness plan. Registration is due May 20. <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/sorec/cfa>

Saturday, June 4
AOSA SCST Joint Annual Meeting, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Embassy Suites, Airport Way, Portland. <http://www.seedtechnology.net/>

Sunday, June 5
AOSA SCST Joint Annual Meeting, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Embassy Suites, Airport Way, Portland. <http://www.seedtechnology.net/>

Monday, June 6
California Poultry Federation Summer Meeting, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Cliffs Resort, 2757 Shell Beach Road, Pismo Beach, Calif., <http://cpif.org/2016-summer-meeting>

AOSA SCST Joint Annual Meeting, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Embassy Suites, Airport Way, Portland. <http://www.seedtechnology.net/>

Tuesday, June 7
California Poultry Federation Summer Meeting, 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Cliffs Resort, 2757 Shell Beach Road, Pismo Beach, Calif. <http://cpif.org/2016-summer-meeting>

AOSA SCST Joint Annual Meeting, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Embassy Suites,

Airport Way, Portland. <http://www.seedtechnology.net/>

Wednesday, June 15
Jump on the Biocontrol Bus: Introductory Biological Pest Management for Nurseries & Greenhouses, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. This workshop and educational tour/demonstration will show new approaches to managing common pests on nursery plants. Field and greenhouse growers will learn beginning methods of biological control, and will be offered in English and Spanish. Featuring Suzanne Wainwright-Evans, Buglady Consulting, and Robin Rosetta, Oregon State University Extension horticulturalist. Pre-registration required. OSU North Willamette Research & Extension Center, 15210 NE Miley Road, Aurora. Cost \$20 morning workshop, \$35 morning workshop plus educational tour and demonstration. Lunch provided. Website: <http://bit.ly/26Bly76>

Saturday, June 18
Ketchum Kalf Rodeo, 1 p.m., Glenwood Rodeo Grounds, 63 Trout Lake Highway, Glenwood, Wash. <http://Business.gorge.net/glenwoodrodeo>

Sunday, June 19
Ketchum Kalf Rodeo, 1 p.m., Glenwood Rodeo Grounds, 63 Trout Lake Highway, Glenwood, Wash. <http://Business.gorge.net/glenwoodrodeo>

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Index
Dairy 8
Livestock 8
Markets 14
Opinion 6

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