

SAUCEFLY SPREADS ITS WINGS

Popular food box delivery business opens a brick and mortar destination

BY TAYLOR GRIGGS

Sara Willis, the owner and chef of Saucefly, has fans all around the world. The first restaurant she opened was in San Jose del Cabo, Mexico, in 1996. From there, she says, she worked as a private chef in Aspen for eight years for one patron who was such a fan of her cooking that he flew her from Eugene to Colorado for 10 days each month. There, Willis mingled with the stars, as one does in Aspen, with people like Lance Armstrong and Barbra Streisand sampling her food.

But now in Eugene, Willis doesn't need to jet all over to give the people what they want. Saucefly's main draw is its subscription food box delivery, a service that has been gaining popularity in the past few years — Sun Basket, HelloFresh and Blue Apron are examples. But Willis says she didn't know how much people love having boxes delivered to their doorstep when she started Saucefly.

"I just thought it would be a good way to not have a restaurant and still be able to do my thing," Willis says. "I didn't realize that it was trending so hard."

But Saucefly's delivery service took off, and Willis says she now has customers all over the country, from California to Wisconsin, and she doesn't have to fly anywhere. Customers receive 8 to 12 recipe ingredients each month, ranging from cocktail mixers — Willis says those are a big hit — to dips and, of course, sauces, all homemade.

Willis sees Saucefly as a graduation from services like Blue Apron, which provides recipients with every pre-portioned ingredient necessary to make a meal. Saucefly's boxes are more relaxed, allowing someone to make a recipe their own with unique, quality ingredients. "I think a lot of clients like that they're kind of pushed to make things that they wouldn't normally make," Willis says.

While Willis has been delivering boxes for almost two years, in April she opened a brick-and-mortar location in downtown Eugene.

"I decided that I would like to have my workspace and first market in my hometown, where I can live close to work and be able to be very involved with the store to learn from the likes and dislikes of the customers," Willis says.

Willis is planning pop-up events, like brunches and weekly recipe-learning classes, hoping to get the word out. She has been involved in the Eugene restaurant business for years, starting the now-closed Red Agave in 2001 and Carmelita Spats in 2013, to name two. She thinks Eugene is on the culinary up-and-up, and foodies here are looking for new places to eat, but they know what they want.

"The restaurant business is tough. People here will give you a couple of chances, but there's not so many people here that if you blow it, they'll keep coming back," she says. "I think they appreciate good food."

She also knows that Eugeneans are into organic, healthy food, which Saucefly definitely promotes with all-natural, homemade ingredients.

"I grew up eating brown rice and sautéed vegetables with hippie parents, so it's important to me," she says. "There's a pretty high density of people like that here. So come check it out."

Saucefly's storefront is open 10:30 am to 8:30 pm Monday through Saturday at 1241 Willamette Street. More information, including food box subscriptions, at saucefly.com.



MORSELS

Food news around Lane County

- **UpStar Ice Cream**, Oregon's first high protein, low calorie, low sugar ice cream, started by University of Oregon graduates, is available in grocery stores this summer, including locally owned Market of Choice.
- We hear **Pig & Turnip** — of Sprout! fame — has opened a Cottage Grove location, at 60 Gateway Blvd.
- Incoming to the Sprout! building at 418 A Street in Springfield, the **PublicHouse** offers beer, wine and vittles, from the folks who built **beergarden**, next to Gray's Garden Center.
- Speaking of Springfield, **Addis Ethiopian's** been assailing all obstacles to bring the first brick and mortar Ethiopian food to our region, maybe ever?
- Straight outta Corvallis, a new gluten free food cart, **Dietz Eatz and Peepz** has opened on 13th and Kincaid. Gluten-free peoples rejoice!
- We hear **Toxic Wings Burgers and Fries** opens a W. 11th location July 1.



• Last year, we wrote a story about the **Yi Shen Market** and owner, immigrant Phung Tu, a much-beloved community member whose family had suffered the loss of her husband Ming, and whose business had been repeatedly targeted by vandals. Now the family has decided it's time to sell.

"After much consideration, it is time for me to hang up my apron," Tu says. "We greatly appreciated your support and friendships made over the years and especially over the last four years."

Yi Shen will change owners in July. You can find the article on Yi Shen, "From Sea to Shining Sea" at eugeneweekly.com.

Unfortunately, the plight of refugees in this country is only worsening, so supporting immigrant-owned restaurants matters now more than ever.

Got any food news? Send it to chow@eugeneweekly.com