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MEDIA RELEASE

Biologist grows “juicy olives” business

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Simon Fraser University computational biologist Maria Tamayo developed an interest in “the real power of food” after years of stomach trouble led her to a naturopath and experiments in eating.

So by little surprise, came an interest in learning more about olive oils.

“My husband is a big fan of olive oil, and being something that we use every day in our meals, we have been looking around to use very good quality olive oil,” says Tamayo, who graduates from SFU on June 12 (morning ceremony).

The couple honeymooned in Spain – which, according to their investigations, is the world’s biggest producer of olive oil – but surprisingly, they say, the Spanish product is not widely available in Vancouver.

“We were delighted to sample the amazing quality of their olive oil and its benefits. I especially remember having the best olive oil I’ve ever had in a small town in Andalusia, where 10 of its 100 inhabitants were over 100 years old.

“That’s when we decided that we wanted to import great olive oil, so that we could share with our friends and community.”

Tamayo and husband Andres created juicyolives.com with the help of SFU’s Venture Connection, which provides support for student and recent alumni ventures, from developing ideas to mentorship, co-op terms, networking, speaker events, and a wide range of other business resources.

They are currently selling the product in local specialty stores.

Their foray into the food business led to related ideas, and after months of trial and error they have also created their own brand of handmade, organic gluten free pasta. For more information see www.organicoslife.com

Tamayo’s next steps are to expand the business and grow her own experience in the food industry.

I arrived at SFU in 2010, very eager to apply mathematics to the real world. I was so excited to start working with Professors on computational biology...

I clearly remember the morning I was supposed to have my first midterm at SFU. It was not a happy morning. I felt such pain in my stomach that I could not even walk. Sure, I was a bit nervous, but this felt like more than just nerves. The next day was my first of several trips to the hospital, and like all of them, it ended with blank looks from doctors who could not figure out what was wrong with me. Thankfully my advisors were understanding enough to accommodate for my frequent sick days, even though it really sounded like I was making it up. At some point I really thought that it was all in my mind. Luckily I was greatly enjoying my studies at SFU, this made my life much brighter. After much frustration with conventional medicine, my husband suggested going trying alternative medicine. I was very fortunate to find a wonder naturopath, Dr. Drew

Sinatra. I will always be thankful with him because he changed my life. After an elimination diet I discovered that I am sensitive to gluten, eggs, yogurt and I am allergic to kale. I removed all of those foods from my diet and it was amazing, I was fine again. After several years of having pain and problems, it was unreal. I actually believe that my newfound general wellbeing made possible a big breakthrough in my thesis work!

That is when my husband and I realized about the real power of food. We realized that food is even more important than we thought and that it is very important to take care of your body and nourish it. Since then we take very good care of ourselves and what we eat, enjoying healthy nourishing and delicious meals!

Simon Fraser University is Canada's top-ranked comprehensive university and one of the top 50 universities in the world under 50 years old. With campuses in Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey, B.C., SFU engages actively with the community in its research and teaching, delivers almost 150 programs to more than 30,000 students, and has more than 120,000 alumni in 130 countries.

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