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New biz serves up yoga-yum

Using kefir, pair of entrepreneurs create a cool new treat

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(KELLY GADZALA/TOWN CRIER)

TINY TUBS OF FUN: Danielle Franz, left, and Sherry Essnaashari with their new probiotic frozen dessert Yogalicious. Essnaashari has found she needs to limit the amount of her product in her home as her husband loves it too much.

She's had health problems. Her business partner is recently married with a baby and a new health practice. Both work full-time and are queens of multi-tasking.

Welcome to the world of being an entrepreneur.

But five years after coming up with the idea, Danielle Franz and her business partner Sherry Essnaashari are set to launch their health-conscious food product at the end of August in Riverdale and the Beach.

A probiotic frozen dessert with active bacterial culture, Yogalicious contains a fermented milk product called kefir, and it's that ingredient that gives greater benefits than most frozen yogurts out there, says Franz.

"It provides far more bacterial culture than yogurt."

About 22 billion active culture per 125 ml serving to be exact, a number that's been verified by lab reports.

Active culture can help digestion problems, something Franz has had first-hand experience with. Five years ago Essnaashari, also a homeopath, suggested Franz try kefir to address her digestive issues. After that Franz started using kefir in everything from salad dressing to sauce.

The idea to make a frozen dessert came out of Franz's research. Heating kefir can destroy the active culture so Franz started researching ways of processing it without losing the benefits. Soon she was bringing vanilla flavour ice cream with kefir to parties and functions.

"Everybody loved it," she said.

Pairing up with Essnaashari was a natural fit, says Franz.

Operating under the business name Troinoa, an anagram for Ontario, the partners are big on promoting local farmers and sustainable ways of farming. Most of their ingredients for Yogalicious are sourced from Ontario, and the eggs and milk are certified organic.

The pair is officially launching the product Aug. 29 from 3-10 p.m. at The

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February 2010

Underwear Affair event in Woodbine Park supporting cancer below the waist. As of that date Yogalicious will also be available at Meat on the Beach, Sun Valley Fine Foods on Danforth Ave. and the Withrow Park Farmers' Market on Saturday mornings.

Though the duo may be launching later than they had initially planned — an illness picked up while travelling in India set Franz back. But the beginning of the school year is a good time to start a new eating habit after a summer of indulgence, says Franz.

Timing aside, there's no denying that developing the product has been a journey.

"It's been a damn long haul," says East York resident Essnaashari, who is also excited about the possibilities for Yogalicious.

She sees the product as an alternative snack for kids and wants to eventually do educative work on healthy eating in schools.

"I grew up with a lot of body issues," she says. "I really want to see this as a venue for young adults ... to not feel badly about who they are."

Since the product is made without cane sugar but rather with a sugar made with birch bark called xylitol, Essnaashari says it's good for diabetics.

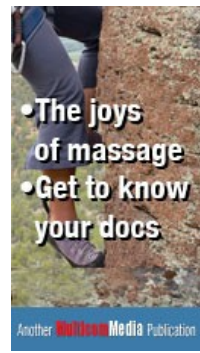
There's great potential for retirement home residents, she says.

"The elderly love their ice cream."

And as with Franz, Essnaashari says she'll eat Yogalicious when she can get her hands on it. But she has to limit it in her home.

"My husband has an ice cream addiction."

For more information visit the Yogalicious website launching at the end of August www.yogalicious.ca.



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