

Coffee Farmer's Daughter Serves Up Fresh Roasted Java

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Recently opened Café Kili of Temple Terrace is a dream come true for Rose. A professional nurse by trade, she relocated with her family to the Bay area 10 years ago from her native Kenya. Since arriving in the United States, she's worked at various jobs, raised three sons, and is an active member in her church, West Gate Baptist (www.westgate.org). In spite of a busy life during these years as wife, mother and financial contributor to the family, she continued to nurture a personal dream of selling fresh roasted coffee.

Growing up as the daughter of a coffee farmer had many benefits. The family business, located in the Central Province of Kenya, was sufficiently prosperous that Rose and her siblings were able to attend school and pursue professional careers. Contributing to a family business left Rose with entrepreneur attitudes and a willingness to take risks. With all this experience in her favor, she lacked one skill she felt essential to delivering quality coffee – the craft of roasting coffee beans. With the support of her husband, Patrick, she took small steps over the last two years towards fulfilling her ambition.

Rose found a company in Clearwater, Ambex Roasters (www.ambexroasters.com) that sells coffee roasting equipment and offers classes on how to roast coffee beans. A friend created a logo for her coffee shop two years before it opened. The search for a suitable location seemed to go on for a long time. Rose said she and Patrick looked in Brandon and New Tampa, but nothing seemed right. They believed that being near USF would be a strategic choice; with two sons at the university, they imagined a place where students could come to socialize and study. They finally found a location only a few miles from USF that they liked. Although it would require 8 months of renovation work, the store had potential.

In spite of the fact that Rose's father could easily provide her with quality coffee beans at a very good price, it is illegal for her to purchase directly from him. The Kenyan government through the Coffee Board of Kenya controls the coffee trade. Farmers are given a price determined by the government and then the beans are sold at auction. The opportunity to fully control profits, and thus, the growth of their business, is out of reach for the coffee farmers of her country, says Rose. When we spoke, Patrick was in Kenya investigating the situation, which seems to be fluid thanks to the pressures of the growing fair trade industry.

Café Kili opened in February with an official Temple Terrace Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting attended by chamber members, President Shane Robin and Executive Director Cheri Donohue. In addition to a selection of freshly made sandwiches, fruit smoothies and tea, the specialty of the house is the variety of hand roasted fresh coffees made by Rose each week. The comfortable spacious café is beautifully decorated with beaded window dressings, bamboo and wicker furniture, warm natural peach colors and a large mural of African animals. Visitors to Cafe Kili have a variety of options including a living room style area for relaxed reading, tables and free wireless for laptop users and wicker seating at the front of the store for playing table games. Located behind Applebee's in the shopping center next to CiCi's pizza, the café hosts a Temple Terrace Chamber networking group at noon each Thursday (www.templeterracechamber.com/ReferralGroups.asp).

Open for only a few months, the family is adjusting to the demands of the new business. Rose and Patrick's two sons Antony and Raphael and nephew Mwaura do shifts at the register and much more. Rose's sister Joyce buys and imports the African jewelry, baskets and clothing for sale. A portion of wall space is devoted to a display of photos of young soldiers killed in Iraq, including Rose and Patrick's son, Marine Lance Cpl. Kevin Waruinge.

Appreciative for all the many helping hands that have made her dream possible, Rose has devoted space in the store to sell bottled water to benefit the Kenia Shaw Children's Orphanage in Eldoret, Kenya. 100% of the proceeds are given directly to family friends, Kenia, Daniel and Stephanie Shaw who are relocating soon to Kenya to support the orphanage and hopefully build another.

Rose admits that before coming to the States, she believed that making money at a business would be relatively easy with freedoms and support not available in her home country. She says being an entrepreneur in America is more difficult than she imagined but is still pleased with the results of her hard work. In addition to warm personal greetings for customers, the family is constantly looking for new ways to improve service and to create an inviting space. Among the vast wasteland of corporately manufactured chain cafes with stylish formula settings and market tested products, Café Kili offers the real deal.

Café Kili
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