

Artisan Edibles takes a bite out of the competition

What began one day as a simple conversation between Judy McArthur and Maureen Drew about a shared passion for food, art and living life to the fullest, quickly developed into a business idea that they didn't let go stale. In very little time McArthur and Drew made their dream business a reality.

"Judy had a long time history with making preserves and had produced them for retail sales on a small scale," says Drew. "My career was in marketing and what I really wanted was a product of my own that I could take to market. It was the perfect match!"

The two women from Parksville and Deep Bay, BC wisely combined their complimentary skills and whipped up a business built on their passions. Artisan Edibles Fine Food Company Ltd. was born four years ago and has since been making a scene in the gourmet food market.

"We produce high quality, all natural and preservative free gourmet preserves. A number of the ingredients are picked wild or sourced through local growers on Vancouver Island," acknowledges McArthur with pride.

Starting with a small product line of delectable chutneys and delicious jellies manufactured out of a commercial kitchen in Drew's home, Artisan Edibles has now expanded to 16 products, including rose petal scone mix, antipasto and dessert sauce. Their manufacturing facilities have expanded to include two co-production houses as the demand for their products has increased. Artisan Edibles is now available across Canada as far east as Ontario and will soon be available for purchase online through their website.

True to their business name, McArthur and Drew integrated their love of art into their business, not just through the fantastic recipes, but also through the packaging that each product is presented in. Every jelly and chutney comes in a beautiful Italian jar that's worth keeping, even when it's empty.

"Customers appreciate our branding and packaging – the artfulness and elegance – and of course that the product delivers on taste and quality. They also appreciate that we know food and how the products can make meal-planning and entertaining easy," says Drew. "Artisan Edibles is always classy, professional and on trend!"

From Drew's description of the business, it's easy to see why Artisan Edibles has already been nominated for two different business awards, not to mention their features in BC Business magazine and Women's Enterprise Centre's recent publication: *New Pioneers: Stories of 100 BC Women Entrepreneurs*.

"Women's Enterprise Centre has really helped us in developing our business skills through their workshops and support materials," recognizes Drew. "We've also had some great opportunities through them, like being featured in the New Pioneers book."

Now settled into their fourth year in business, Drew and McArthur are feeling very positive about the future. With expansion plans in place and an increased focus on corporate sales, they have a plan to follow. In fact, having a plan is the most important advice they feel they can pass on to a new entrepreneur. "You have to build a solid business plan and make sure that you continually revisit your business strategy and update it," says McArthur. "We like running our own show, so planning for the future of the business is how we expect to keep on doing it!"

