



HARGITAI'S Home to tasty crêpes in Hamilton



Hargitai's owner Maria Branigan prepares a crepe at her 304 Barton Street East location.

ALYSSA LAI

By Alyssa Lai

Many think of thin, light crêpes as a French delicacy, available only in luxurious Parisian restaurants. But for Maria Branigan, it is a snack close to home. Born in Budapest, Hungary, crêpe was a staple food in her household – she even ate them for lunch or dinner.

As the owner of Hamilton's newest crêperie, Hargitai's, Branigan brings

"Branigan brings recipes from her kitchen home to the dining table of her vibrant restaurant."

recipes from her kitchen home to the dining table of her vibrant restaurant. Hargitai's, named after her maiden name, launched in April 2012.

The inspiration to start a crêperie came to her after seeing how popular it was in Toronto – customers lining up

for crêpes even after 11 at night.

"I thought to myself...my look how popular crêpes are!" wrote Branigan, who came to Canada when she was 15 years old. She started making crepes when she was 16.

As a mother with two toddlers, Branigan would be the first to admit that starting a business is no easy feat.

One challenge she noted, is maintaining that balance between her business and family responsibilities.

"It breaks my heart to hear my five-year-old telling me that he wants to be with me

all the time and that he wished I didn't have to go to work," she admitted.

"We all know a woman's job does not stop at 5pm when they punch out," continued Branigan, referring to child care and house-keeping responsibilities.

Despite that, Branigan thinks that

women entrepreneurs should be proud of themselves for establishing and running their own businesses. In her view, they make up a small percentage of the population of entrepreneurs, citing a culture that is less supportive of women who chose to work for themselves, rather than for others.

"You really need to prepare to sacrifice. You can't understand the concept [of starting a business] until you truly feel it," she emphasized.

As a former marketing professional who quit her job to start her own business, she credited her husband for his ongoing support and encouragement.

"If not, it would have been another idea that flew away."

Her marketing background has

helped her manage the operations of her business. Additionally, she finds social media to be useful in getting the word around about her business.

An active user on the micro-blogging site Twitter, Branigan uses it to not just to spread the word about Hargitai's but also to engage with the online community.

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In the future, Branigan hopes to expand by opening at other locations in Hamilton. ■

For more information visit www.hargitais.ca or visit 304 Barton Street East.

New online magazine highlights local arts

By Alyssa Lai

It was the taste for fashion and the love for journalism that led two local high school youths to start an online magazine. The brainchild of Westdale Secondary School's grade 11 students, Ava Campbell and Maya Amoah, Iila Magazine (pronounced "eye-la") is an eclectic blend of local fashion, music, and art.

The title of the magazine itself reflects the creative vision of the two friends.

"It doesn't mean anything, but it can mean anything," emphasized Amoah.

"Our magazine is all about creativity, creating new stuff," she added.

Campbell and Amoah started brainstorming for content in May 2012. Their first issue, released in August 2012, featured local craft shop, Needlework and independent clothing store, Bodega. In addition, the magazine also spotlights local bloggers, most recently *I Heart Hamilton*, a blog focusing on uncovering and highlighting Hamilton's art, music, and food scene.

Art and fashion are the primary focus of the magazine. Campbell brings her experience as a writer for *kNeon* magazine, an art/fashion publication based on Austria. At 13, Campbell profiled Toronto on behalf of *kNeon*, highlighting places to eat and spring fashion trends in the city.

Iila has become a creative outlet for the two friends to learn journalism and graphic

design while exploring Hamilton's creative community. Amoah spends most of her time scouting for local artists to profile. Their most recent interview with local filmmaker Scott Foley was paired alongside with photographer Richard Ramirez Jr. and artist Quinton Teodori.

Despite their different focuses, in the end, art is still art, she said. "There's so many branches in it. There's always a way to combine different aspects of it," continued Amoah, who also owns her own clothing line called Nebula, selling bleached sweater and tank tops. Campbell, who herself learns graphic design through practice, nodded in agreement.

While Amoah does most of the writing and Campbell the photography and layout, the process of publishing the magazine online is largely collaborative one. They enjoy connecting with Hamilton's artists and musicians. The reception of the magazine has been positive, with over 5,000 views within the first two weeks of publication. In the long run, they hope to have the magazine printed and bonded for sale.

Sure, there's the occasional writer's block, confessed Amoah. However she is confident that creativity and new story ideas will always make way.

"When they do come, they come at full drive," she smiled. ■ Visit Iila online at: www.iila.blogspot.ca.



Westdale High School students Ava Campbell and Maya Amoah started Iila Magazine, an online publication featuring local fashion, music and art.