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**Special to the Reading Eagle: Courtney H. Diener-Stokes** | Olga Sorzano recently began brewing kombucha at the Artisan Exchange, a shared commercial kitchen. Her husband installed a water filtration system, in background, to purify the water before the tea is brewed.

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## Couple brews up new endeavor

By Courtney H. Diener-Stokes - Reading Eagle correspondent

Olga Sorzano, an award-winning personal chef and organic caterer, recalled something her mother once told her that pertains to her latest food endeavor.



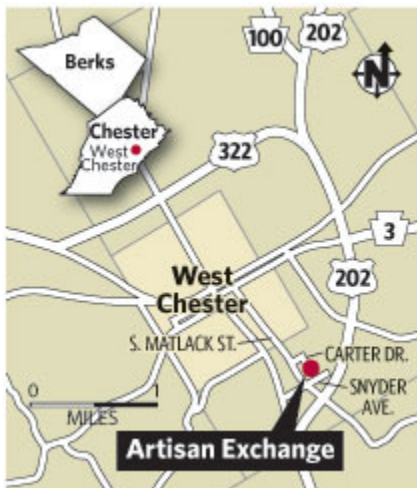
"Many new things are nothing but well-forgotten old ones," Sorzano said.

MONDAY, AUG. 15

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This rings true in particular for her as she embarks on starting a beverage business based on kombucha, a fermented sweet tea she refers to as a sparkling probiotic tonic.



"I used to drink kombucha as a little kid, and my great-grandma used to brew it," Sorzano said.. "I pretty much drank it all my life. To me it was just a really great fermented beverage."

After moving to the United States from Siberia in 2000 and having her first child in 2008, she began craving that taste.

"I had been brewing it for a while, and I discovered it in a store, and they were saying, 'Oh, this new drink we have,' " she said.

She realized it was the same fermented beverage she has always known.

This year, after recognizing there was a lack of local kombucha brewers, Sorzano and her husband, Troy, who live in Downingtown, Chester County, decided to share the recipe in the form of Baba's Brew.

She called her late great-grandmother Baba.

"Last year I went to the fermentation festival (in Santa Barbara, Calif.), and I was really blown away by how many kombucha brewers there were," she said. "I got so inspired brewing it for myself and my clients."

When it came to figuring out where to produce the beverage in larger quantities to sell, they were fortunate enough to come across a business that caters to food artisans in West Chester called the Artisan Exchange, about a 45-minute drive from Reading.

"The thing that attracted us is that we didn't have to rent a whole building," Troy said.. "We could rent a small space at the Artisan Exchange for a fraction of the cost."

The lack of funds for a commercial space can act as a deterrent for an aspiring food entrepreneur to pursue his or her vision.

"The whole issue of being licensed to actually sell products in stores requires a commercial kitchen, and that is a hurdle for someone starting out," Troy said. "You can't make money to get a kitchen until you sell your product. Going into a shared kitchen and space like Artisan Exchange makes it possible for you to get your business started."

The Exchange also has a weekly, year-round, indoor market where food entrepreneur residents can sell their items and also serves as a good testing ground. Next month, Baba's Brew aims to begin offering five different flavors, using seasonal, organic, fair trade and local ingredients.

"You can be so creative with kombucha," Olga said. "It is a clean palette. You can play with herbs and berries. Every tea gives different nuances and flavors."

Flower Power is the flavor of the season. It involves chamomile, rose petals and hibiscus.

"We will do Blackberry Sage and Strawberry Basil for the summer, and Chai for winter," she said .

Many, like Sorzano, drink kombucha for the health benefits they believe it offers.

"It's much more than just a beverage," Olga said. "It's a probiotic tonic and a much healthier alternative to carbonated beverages. It is raw, and there are no artificial ingredients.

"The benefits I value is that it has all of the probiotics and beneficial bacteria. It is good to help build the immune system. It promotes healthy gut flora, which is the first steppingstone to good health."

Contact Courtney H. Diener-Stokes: [life@readingeagle.com](mailto:life@readingeagle.com).

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### **About the Artisan Exchange**

The Artisan Exchange's mission is to provide an affordable environment that supports entrepreneurs committed to producing handcrafted, sustainable foods while sharing sound business practices that have a positive social impact. It leases small-scale, individual food-related manufacturing and distribution workstations in a fully equipped, 27,000-square-foot distribution center including sanitized work and clean-up area. The facility is U.S. Department of Agriculture and Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture certified.

Source: [www.artisanexchangewcpa.com](http://www.artisanexchangewcpa.com)

### **Leased space**

The Artisan Exchange leases individual manufacturing and distribution workstations and commercial kitchen space to small food production entrepreneurs. Additional support includes conference space, V/F, business planning and office support, sales and marketing and the ability to participate in the Artisan indoor weekly year-round market.



MONDAY, AUG. 15

### Hourly rental space

The Artisan Exchange offers hourly rental for food entrepreneurs in a state-of-the-art, fully approved facility, food storage space, access to wholesale distribution program, and access to Saturday indoor Artisan Food and Farmers Market.

### For more information

**The Artisan Exchange**: 208 Carter Drive, West Chester, 610-719-0282.

**Weekly indoor Artisan Food and Farmer's Market at the Artisan Exchange**: every Saturday year-round, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

See list of vendors on the website.

### Where to find Artisan Exchange resident food artisans' products locally:

**Kimberton Whole Foods**: 1139 Ben Franklin Highway West, Amity Township, 610-385-1588

**Baba's Brew**, 484-557-0125, [drink@babasbrew.com](mailto:drink@babasbrew.com)

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Artisan Exchange website

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