



SIMPLIFY...EATING HEALTHY WITH A HECTIC SCHEDULE (FEBRUARY 2016)

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From an early age, Northfield resident Rael Rodning always had an interest in working with food.

“I wanted to be a chef before it was ‘cool’ to want to be a chef,” she said. However, at the urging of her father, she played it safe career-wise, receiving a business degree, eventually going on to work in finance and corporate IT consultation. But the desire to work with food never left Rodning.

“I need to do this now, or I will take this regret to my grave,” she said.

Rodning’s venture, Jiva Bites, finds her putting together pre-prepared meals and delivering them to your door. She said what separates her service from other national services is her emphasis on local and organic food.

She said that the name is a play on the term “soul food.”

“‘Jiva’ is one sanskrit word for ‘soul,’” she said. “I came up with the name after spending weeks calling the business ‘The Business.’”

Rodning said that she saw “The Business” as a way to give back.

“I want to help people feel good about eating,” she said. “I believe food is more than just calories. It is something that makes us who we are.”

Prior to launching Jiva Bites, Rodning said that as a busy, working mother with four children, she tried using similar prepared meal services.

“None of these other businesses are using local or organic food,” she said. “The meals are being shipped from FedEx; the whole thing went against my personal beliefs.”

She said that the tipping point she reached was she arrived home after working a long day to find a prepared meal that she thought would take around 20 minutes to assemble wasn’t really “prepared” at all.

“I looked at that pile of food and I nearly burst into tears,” she said. “It was all there, but I had to wash it all and cut it up. It took nearly 90 minutes. It was way too overwhelming.”

Rodning said that with Jiva Bites, she hopes to put the joy back into having a meal.

“A lot of us have busy lives and we’ve lost the joy,” she said. “Meals become more of a chore. What do people want? They want food that is fast and easy.”

Jiva Bites is still in its early stages. Rodning put together five meal kits at first and sent out an email to her friends as a way of slowly growing the business.

Rodning hand delivers the meals to you and she said you get 12 plates of food, “whether you want that much or not.” It’s designed for three meals and then to provide leftovers.

“Right now, I’m trying to keep it small and not overgrow this,” she said. For the first 18 weeks of the business, she will be limiting her list of customers to 30 a week.

Rodning aligned herself with Northfield farmer Becca Carlson, who operates Seeds Farm. The two connected over their shared philosophies on sustainable and ethical practices.

Carlson said that families today are in such a hurry and are quick to grab a packaged meal without considering its nutritional value.

Rodning picks up the food from Seeds one day and then prepares the meals for delivery the next. Carlson said that when the food is that fresh, it hangs onto more nutrients.

“It’s from the field to your table in a matter of hours,” she said.

Nicole Krenzel was one of Rodning’s early subscribers to the Jiva Bites service. She saw the value in trying out the meals because as a mother who is now going back to school, she said that she wasn’t finding the time to come up with a meal plan and then do the grocery shopping.

Krenzel said that the idea of supporting locally grown food was important to her family.

“The food doesn’t have to travel very far,” she said. “Our food is right here.”

She said that her children were skeptical at first of the Jiva Bites meals, but loved them after trying them out.

“After we ate them, my husband asked me if we had any more,” Krenzel said.

To learn more about Jiva Bites and to sign up for meal delivery, visit Rael Rodning’s website at jivabites.com.

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