



THE HAPPY EGGPLANT

Gourmet Food & Kitchen Shoppe

Offers more than 7,000 unique items . . .

Contributed by Dick Davis

A lifelong love of food and the art of cooking fine food brought Pamela Drobney across Pennsylvania to current ownership with husband Michael of The Happy Eggplant Gourmet Food & Kitchen Shoppe, a slice of gourmet heaven in Hermitage.

While a student at West Hazleton High School, Pamela started an experimental cooking class, then followed it up with a BS in Food Service, Restaurant and Hotel Management at Penn State University. Pamela's desire to enrich culinary experiences for others endures today in Hermitage.

The Happy Eggplant, located in the former Je'Riel Fashions space, 1550 E. State St. in the Philadelphia Candies Plaza, has more than 7,000 unique items, about half are food items and half are equipment for cooking and enjoying fine food. (The shoppe isn't a restaurant) If you can't find your favorite olive oil, vinegar, pasta, salad dressing, packaged snack or mix, or cookware and utensils at The Happy Eggplant, it probably can't be found.



"We have the most wonderful customers who share my passion," says Pamela. "We are so grateful for their support, their patronage, and their friendship."

Ariston cold-pressed, extra virgin olive oil from Greece and 12-year aged balsamic vinegar from Modena, Italy is the heart and soul of the store, Pamela

says. Ariston Specialties began as a small family business in Connecticut in 1997. Its goal is to provide a quality cold press extra virgin olive oil to the U.S. market at an affordable price. To achieve this, Ariston decided to produce their product in the Kalamata region of Greece using koroneiki variety olives.

The Happy Eggplant has a Refill and Save Program for both Ariston olive oil and balsamic vinegar as a way to protect the environment and keep the prices reasonable.

Food items include Bob's Red Mill, Robert Rothchild Farm, Garden Spot, Rossi Pasta, and Tony Packo Pickles, while



cookware, accessories and gadgets include Ann Clark, Cole and Mason, Fox Run, Le Creuset, Kyocera Ceramics, Out of the Woods of Oregon, and Rada Cutlery, which is made in the U.S.

The shoppe also has a website of www.happyeggplant.com, a blog, and a Facebook page.

The original owner came up with The Happy Eggplant moniker: it is named after a Le Creuset eggplant-shaped French ceramic oven that was a gift from his mother years ago.

The Drobney's initially turned down the previous owner when approached about a purchase in 2010. The couple said they were happily retired.

But regular patron Pamela was grateful to have it in the community and didn't want to see it close. After much consideration, she and Michael purchased the business.

"I wasn't interested," Michael jokes. "But Pamela was, so we compromised and bought it."

And the rest, as they say, is Happy Eggplant history.

