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Green Warrior queen ready

By Kate Wilson

After six years of living, traveling and tasting her way across the globe, Carolanne Rushe has found her sweet spot back home in Sligo, where she is busy launching a plant-based food company, Green Warrior.

The adventure began six years ago when the now 28-year-old Rushe moved to Qatar to live and work, followed by a spell in Perth, Australia, where she worked as an executive assistant to earn enough money to pay for a three-month course at Darina Allen's Ballymaloe Cookery School. Following that, it was a year-and-a-half in Johannesburg, South Africa, where she ran a food stall at a farmers market three days a week. She served up raw confections and a variety of fresh salads.

"That's what gave me the confidence to know that that's what I wanted to do. To really get into food that way," Rushe said. "You get instant customer feedback. It just makes sense when you're making the food and serving the food and chatting with your customers and getting to know what they want."

"And you're able to rearrange the menu and change certain things to suit the customer demand and their interests. I actually started off vegetarian, but my clientele were vegan body builders and mostly male so I started moving with them and what they were interested in."

In April 2014, she moved home to Strandhill Road for what was supposed to be a summer-long respite before heading back to South Africa.

"I think I was home a week in Sligo and I applied for a stall at the Strandhill People's Market," Rushe said. "I was sitting at my parents' house one evening after dinner and I thought 'You know what, I'll just send them an email to see if they're interested in me doing it just for the summer.' And he [market founder Alan Mulrooney] got back to me the next morning."

Eager to have participants with market experience, the newly-established Strandhill People's Market were happy to have Rushe on



HAPPY CUSTOMERS: Carolanne pictured at a Rennafix event in Strandhill last year, sharing her Green Warrior goodness with Gary Reddin (left) and Alan Mulrooney.

board.

"I started the market on May 4 and I knew instantly that that's what I wanted to do and that's where I wanted to be. It was pretty successful and it was really nice to see that people were interested in raw food and vegan food."

And so plans to return to South Africa were cancelled. What had been a life of globe-trotting and culinary learning morphed into the official launch of Green Warrior on

August 4, 2014.

Two weeks later, she was selling her seven-product food line to Kate's Kitchen in the heart of Sligo Town, and two weeks after that in Shell's Café in Strandhill. The line includes kale pesto, mint spirulina balls, raw cacao brownies, red pepper hummus and peanut butter bars.

"I didn't think that I'd be able to move home and create a job for myself and make a living at a vegetable stand," Rushe

between giggles, which are frequent and contagious.

She is relaxed and warm and has a few discreet tattoos collected during her travels, each of which comes with a story. She is equal parts nutrition expert and free-spirited adventurer. Facts and travel tales bubble up frequently in conversation.

For example: Coconut oil is better for moisturising in the summer, sesame oil in the winter because it's more warming. Raw cacao contains theobromine which is a cousin to caffeine. Coconut flour is high in fiber.

She skydived in Nepal, received a hands-on blessing from the Dalai Lama and became a yoga teacher in the Himalaya Mountains. All of these tidbits are shared with modest authority and unbridled positivity for life in general.

"I don't like to go around preaching about veganism because I don't believe in that

way of introducing people to it," Rushe said. "But I do like to encourage people to eat more greens and fruit and grains. And also to show people that vegan food is really substantial. There's lots of flavors in it and you get all your nutrients in one meal. You don't need to go through the animal products to get to it."

Rushe says she learned much of what she knows about nutrition and veganism from reading and eating. She started making substitutions in her cooking in Australia where she found alternative health food products easily accessible.

"I still remember the first time I used coconut flour," Rushe said. "I used it as an alternative to regular flour and I was making scones. But coconut flour has four times the absorbency as normal flour, so you need to compensate for that by adding in extra liquids, whereas I didn't. So I made



BROWNIES: Proving healthy can also mean sweet, Carolanne's raw cacao fudge brownies.

CHOICE: Carolanne's Super Salads proved very popular at the Strandhill Summer Market.

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to start a food revolution



BRAND: The salads wear the Green Warrior branding.

premises.

During market season, Rushe begins production for the Strandhill People's Market on Thursday because many of the foods she sells require multiple steps and lots of time to prepare.

Her flat breads, for example, dry for three days. Sprouts have to be soaked for 48 hours and buckwheat has to be dehydrated. Friday she stays up until two in the morning packaging her goods and is up again at five on Saturday to prep the fresh stuff.

Sunday evening Rushe posts a menu on Facebook and customers have until Monday evening to place an order. Menu items might include vegan lasagna for two for €10, chickpea and lentil dahl for €6.50 or a raw kale salad for €4.50. Rushe then delivers the orders to her customers' homes at a mutually convenient time on Wednesdays.

"The novelty of someone delivering healthy food to your door...people love it. It's really cool," Rushe said. "It's really personal too."

After several customers tracked

door-stopper scones. You could throw them at the wall and break the wall."

She took her first raw food course in Australia, did a few more in South Africa and trained online with the Matthew Kenny Culinary Institute, which is a four-week intensive, raw food chef training course.

Now, as a one-woman show and using Facebook as her only marketing tool, Rushe finds Sligo's response to her services and products hugely positive and demanding enough to require expansion. She currently does all of her cooking in a Health Service Executive-approved kitchen adjacent to her parents' home but is in the process of moving to different



MARKET: Carolanne preparing her stand at the Strandhill Summer Market.

her down by way of Kate's Kitchen, Rushe began catering as well. In January alone she'll be serving up several vegan chocolate ganache layer cakes and a vegan chili con cacao enriched with a chocolate ganache, which comes with pico de gallo, guacamole and cashew sour cream.

"A lot of the dishes I use in the

company would have come from just sitting around having dinner with my family and friends," Rushe said. "I made the lasagna once and they nearly swan-dived into it."

As for what's to come, Rushe said that 2015 is the year of action for Green Warrior and that she plans to go from doing farmers markets and stocking just local shops to moving

into a bigger location, employing a few people and selling her products nationwide.

"I have found my people at home, which is what I never thought I would do. And I just rediscovered being at home."

Find Green Warrior on Facebook and on Rushe's blog, www.carolanneskitchen.com



YOGA: Carolanne Rushe relaxing with some yoga on the beach in Strandhill. She has previously lived in Qatar and Perth.