

## Restoring ritual of tea

Cérémonie owners have Vancouver connection.

CYNTHIA RAMSAY

From the professions of law and psychology, Elli and Efrat Schorr turned to tea. And, from the Israeli market, they are expanding worldwide. Cérémonie Tea can be bought in several locations in the Lower Mainland, for instance, but the Schorrs' connections to Vancouver are deeper.

"Efrat's enduring memory of Vancouver is of the hospitality and openness that she and her family experienced in their time in B.C.," Elli told the *Independent*. "For me, Cérémonie Tea is an opportunity to return the warmth to the Vancouver community, sending the best flavors that Israel has to offer back home, along with our friendship."

Elli was born in Washington, D.C., and Efrat was born in New York. She lived out east for her earliest years, but then the family moved to the West Coast, living in Vancouver for two years and then in Richmond for another two years. Her father, Rabbi William Altshul, was the principal of Vancouver Talmud Torah from 1979-83 and Efrat

worked at VTT, with kindergarteners through Grade 3s. Her father helped found Richmond's Eitz Chaim Congregation.

From Vancouver, Efrat's family moved to D.C., which is where she met Elli. They were high school sweethearts, marrying in 1995. Raised in strong Zionist homes and inspired by their experiences in post-high school yeshivah programs in Israel, they made aliyah in 2005 after they completed their graduate studies.

Elli was a lawyer, graduating from Georgetown University, and Efrat has a PhD in developmental psychology from the University of Maryland, College Park. After working in their respective fields for several years, they decided to go into business in 2012.

"After sharing 20 years of marriage and five children," reads Cérémonie's website, "these childhood sweethearts decided to look for their next adventure together." They bought Cérémonie Tea from the founders in February 2013.

"We were looking for a business opportunity and explored cof-

fee, even visiting Ethiopia, the birthplace of coffee," Elli told the *Independent*. "Along the way, we encountered Cérémonie Tea, with its striking design and delicious products and fell in love. We worked in partnership with the founders for about a year and then purchased the company from them, undertaking management of the company since then."

The company is based in Migdal Haemek in the northern part of Israel. The Schorrs live in Gush Etzion, in the town of Alon Shevut, which is about a two-hour commute. "We are enjoying the learning experience of working in a different environment, far away from our English-speaking bubble!" said Elli.

Established in 2003, the Schorrs have expanded the company's reach internationally since taking over, beginning in Italy in 2014 and the Netherlands in 2015. The ingredients – whole tea leaves, along with spices, herbs and flowers – come from around the world, and



"The mini cube is our modern interpretation of the traditional ceremonies of ancient cultures," say Cérémonie Tea's Elli and Efrat Schorr.

COURTESY OF CÉRÉMONIE TEA

the tea bag material is imported from Japan. "Presently," said Elli, "we are not using compostable materials, but are exploring such options for the future."

Cérémonie Tea offers a range of products, including mini cubes, pyramid tea bags and loose tea blends.

Bringing "their American style of customer service and entrepreneurial spirit to the traditional world of tea," the Schorrs are trying to return people to the "ritual of serving tea."

"The mini cube is our modern interpretation of the traditional ceremonies of ancient cultures," explains their website, "innovative in our style of serving but classic and timeless in our taste."

Currently, Cérémonie Tea can be found in Richmond at Save-On-Foods at Ironwood Plaza, Loblaws City Market and Superstore, as well as at Superstore in Vancouver on Marine Drive and Save-On-Foods South Point in Surrey. There is always the option of buying online, of course, at [ceremonieteacom.com](http://ceremonieteacom.com).



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