

Sweet smell of success!

■ Galway woman's online perfumery achieves international acclaim



Ruth Ruane...Galway woman behind the Natural Perfume Academy.

BY DENISE McNAMARA

A GALWAY woman who set up an online school of perfumery over a decade ago has just received rare internationally recognised certification.

The Continuous Professional Development Certification Service award is a huge boost for Ruth Ruane, who set up The Natural Perfume Academy in 2008 in collaboration with Californian natural perfumer Justine Crane.

Justine wrote the course and teaches on it while Ruth set up the platform and the business side of things.

Ruth, who grew up in the premises in Moycullen where the White Gables Restaurant currently trades, lives and works from Castlegar Village in the city.

She long had an interest in natural perfumery through her natural skincare brand White Witch. She had been searching for somebody to make a 100% natural perfume when she came across Justine.

"Justine had already been making natural perfumes for over a decade at that stage. We

did all our communicating online, without video or phone calls. She noticed there was a need for a decent fully online natural perfumery school.

"I had been working with a computer repair/web design company for ten years, my ex-husband's business, so I felt confident in that area," Ruth recalls.

They ran a free pilot course for the first year and they used the feedback to create the first fee-paying course.

The mother of seven - and granny to three grandchildren, with another on the way - explains that their aim was to offer a service to anyone serious about wanting to learn how to make natural perfumes.

"Our original goal was not to make money. I enjoyed the work of administrating. I never thought it would take off the way it did."

One of the perfumers from the pilot course, Ane Walsh from Brazil, became a mentor for students and translated the course into Portuguese. Another student from Barcelona, Marta, translated it into Spanish.

"The kind of students that

enrol are just amazing. Some of them become outstandingly talented natural perfumers. Justine and Ane will sometimes message me when they are doing the end of class evaluations to tell me that one or other student has made something really stunning. That is an amazing feeling. We have students from all over the world, the USA especially, and Australia, Canada, all over Europe and of course Ireland."

One of their Irish students, Niamh O'Connell, went on to open a natural perfumery business, called Esmeralda Botanicals.

The demand for courses in the natural fragrance market is growing every year. There is a global trend towards the local producer and craftsperson.

"It's not about ripping the arse out if it in terms of profit no matter what. People are changing how they purchase, they know what they choose to spend their money on is what will make a difference. People will continue to wear perfumes, which they have done since the beginning of recorded history," she enthuses.

"The planet, the environ-

ment, comes first so everything we teach is taught in that vein. It is natural cosmetic product creators as well as those who work for companies who create perfumes who join us as well as those with dreams of becoming artisan perfumers."



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The course has grown organically, based on feedback from students. In the beginning there were between five and ten students in a class. That has since gone up to 30 and more.

The diploma course is not cheap, costing €1,075 and additional €300 for the perfumer's kit, tools and equipment.

"There is something really

special about the bonds that form even though not many have met in person," explains Ruth.

For the last seven months she has worked every spare moment on implementing changes in order to meet the strict criteria of the CPD certification.

Now that hurdle has been jumped, she has plans to launch new courses.

One of them is on enfleurage by Charle Pan Dawson, who lives on a lilac farm in New York. Enfleurage teaches how to extract the scent molecules from fragrant botanicals and turn them into a natural perfumery material. There is also a soap making course through Portuguese that teaches how to make soap from wood ashes.

"Our students work with all natural materials, and with naturals comes the good, the bad and the ugly. Sometimes naturals don't look or smell 'pretty'; that's the realness and complexity of the real deal. Mixing them together to make something good is really hard and much harder than working with synthetic chemicals."

Visit the website www.intapa.com.

NUI Galway's Consent Week

CHANGING the description of 'revenge porn', revealing the extent of period poverty and increasing STI awareness are among the topics for examination this week as NUI Galway Students' Union marks its first ever Consent Week.

Revenge porn will be discussed in a workshop on image-based sexual abuse, which will look at why it needs to be renamed - as well as how to support victims emotionally and practically.

Active Consent workshops will also provide a safe space to explore the nuances of sexual intimacy and consent so if people choose to be intimate with others it will be mutually consensual, mutually enjoyable and done safely.

The workshops are interactive, informative, based on understandings of the context in which young people are exploring their sexuality now, and share practical skills relevant for their own relationships.

The Active Consent programme have recently launched an online consent hub, www.consenthub.ie, which provides a range of resources and tools for young people, parents, student leaders and educators to raise awareness and knowledge on sexual consent.

SU Vice-President/Welfare and Equality Officer Cora Clarke said that Students' Unions and Universities needed to take a strong lead in ending the culture of victim blaming - because sexual violence and harassment are still prevalent issues in today's world.

"Consent is Ongoing, Mutual and Freely Given - this is the core message of the NUIG Active Consent programme," she said.

SU President Róisín Nic Lochlainn said that they wanted Consent Week events will encourage students to take a responsible attitude to sexual health and healthy relationships.

"We still have a long way to go in Irish society in terms of breaking down the taboo of talking about sex. We want our students to be educated about their sexual rights," she said.

More details about events are available at www.su.nuigalway.ie



SU President Róisín Nic Lochlainn.