



FRIEND's Fiji Style products are a taste of Fiji's tradition.



FRIEND Fiji's Dr Jone Hawea and Sashi Kiran at the Fine Food Australia stand in Melbourne.

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Fijian health foods stir interest at Fine Food Australia

Posted by DEVPACIFICPERISCOPE *on*
SEPTEMBER 29, 2016

This year, health foods from Fiji FRIEND's Fiji Style products featured at the Pacific Trade & Invest Pacific Island stand at Fine Food Australia in Melbourne.

The beautifully packaged herbal teas, spices, jams, chutneys, virgin coconut oil and gluten free products were developed by a social enterprise called the Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises & Development (FRIEND) and sells its products under the brand name FRIEND's Fiji Style.



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income using local resources and traditional skills. Their chutneys are made from traditional recipes of people from Indian origin who settled in Fiji more than a 100 years ago. Gluten free flours are from the indigenous Fijian traditions. FRIEND's Fiji style range of herbal teas and spices come from both the traditions and are grown organically by small holder farmers.

All the foods are produced at their HACCP certified quality controlled production facility at Tuvu in Lautoka and all their raw materials are grown by farmers using good agricultural practices. FRIEND is also actively working with farmers in certifying their products organic in efforts to promote healthy foods.

Their newly launched raw pressed virgin coconut oil, coconut flour and desiccated coconut are products from the outer islands of Fiji and made from coconuts collected from the beaches.

The renowned super herb turmeric grows wild organically in the rainforests around Fiji. This is carefully collected, sun dried, powdered and packed in spice jars.

Layalaya root or wild ginger root has



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been widely used by indigenous communities to boost the immune system and aid digestive and respiratory ailments. Everyone in a Fijian household remembers grandmas squeezing the juice and making sure every family member drank it. This root is dried, powdered and packed in tea bags for easy access to a healthy cuppa. To enhance the taste wildy grown cinnamon is mixed in the tea bags.

The range of teas included Hibiscus Cup, Lemon Grass, Peppermint and Basil. Whilst the herbs and spices included pure turmeric, Lemon Grass, Basil, Rosemary and Kaffir lime leaves.

FRIEND has been adding taste to chef's tables at Five star hotels around Fiji for the last decade.

FRIEND's Fiji style range of chutneys are widely used as dips as well as marinades in various cuisines.

FRIEND herbs including lemon grass is also very popularly used as marinades to enhance the flavours of



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turn to health foods.

Dr Jone Hawea – Helping the community beat diabetes

FRIEND has not only introduced its herbal remedies and teas internationally at Fine Food Australia in Melbourne but back in Fiji, FRIEND is actively encouraging more local Fijians to return to their traditional food sources in an effort to curb the continuing rise of obesity and diabetes.



Dr Jone with FRIEND Fiji's healthy foods range at the Fine Food Australia show in Melbourne.

Dr Jone Hawea, Associate Director at FRIEND is a surgeon who specialises in amputating diseased limbs from diabetic patients in Fiji. He joined the not-for-profit organisation four years ago after leaving Labasa Hospital searching for an avenue to decrease the prevalence of diabetes and amputations. Believing that prevention is better than cure, Dr Hawea promotes a holistic, more



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emotional and economic health. But the high rate of diabetes has crippled many in the community.

Fiji has the second highest rate of diabetes in the world and a high rate of amputations. After so many amputations Dr Hawea was tired of it.

“I wanted to do something about it at the community level,” he said.

Like other Pacific Island countries, Fiji has its own traditional herbal teas, remedies and cures. Offering Fijians pre-packaged traditional teas and condiments, dried herbs and spices helps communities to value their traditional remedies and more commonly used foods.

However, being a social enterprise FRIEND has had to compete with strong marketing from the western world. For local Fijians buying bread and other western products is a status symbol and a sign of affluence. But Dr Jone is trying to turn that around. He said Fijian and Indian traditional foods and cuisines using coconut and turmeric could become super foods.

Dr Hawea adopts a different approach in dealing with obesity is not big on lecturing or preaching to



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structure to push the message home about preventative health care. As a public speaker he is in demand and uses every opportunity to raise awareness amongst his colleagues, the wider professional communities, policy makers and the private sector.

Dr Jone says that every guest at FRIEND is treated with their refreshing cup of herbal tea every visit and their team have pot of herbal tea they drink from all day. At FRIEND they have a food policy to encourage healthy eating and all their community outreach work ensures healthy food at these events. After all change begins at home.

For more information please contact: Jeremy Grennell at jeremy.grennell@pacificttradeinvest.com

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