

# Industrial Grind Coffee – a labor of love for owners

By Dave Fidlin

As Kathy Hansen and Barbara Jeanine prepared to retire from the military in 2010, an inevitable question percolated in the years, months, weeks and days leading up to that milestone day: Now what?

As Hansen and Jeanine — a longtime couple who wed in 2013 — plotted out their future together, they said they knew they aspired to have a second chapter that was as rich in meaning and satisfaction as their years of service in the Navy.

“I don’t know how to sit still,” Hansen said with a laugh, as she reflected on the pondering process.



(l to r) Barbara Jeanine and wife Kathy Hansen pose with some of their custom coffee blends (Courtesy of Crystal Jones)

As it turned out, coffee was the answer to the question. Industrial Grind was birthed in early 2011, months after Hansen and Jeanine closed out their respective 30- and 20-year careers in the military.

The operation grew into its current state when Hansen and Jeanine purchased an established coffee shop, Jitters on Park, at 3922 Park Blvd., in Hillcrest and gave the business a new name and makeover.

In the six years since that pivotal moment, the couple opened three additional locations, created an offshoot business known as IG Bakery and began brewing their own house blends.

“We’re partners in business and partners in life,” Jeanine said. “We created a vision for this business together.”

In a nod to Industrial Grind’s ongoing evolution, Hansen and Jeanine also brought on board a new business partner, Crystal Jones, who handles such managerial tasks as generating sales goals and other logistics that feed into day-to-day operations.

Jones, who joined the Industrial Grind family a year ago, is Hansen’s niece.

“We’re all very proud of what we do around here,” Jones said. “One of the things I find very satisfying is knowing we’ve somehow made a customer happy.”

Transitioning from military service to coffee entrepreneurship might seem like an epic leap to the casual observer. When asked about the life change, however, Hansen was quick to say, “It really isn’t a far stretch.”

“It is a lot of work and you put in a lot of hours,” Hansen said, drawing parallels between the two scenarios. “There’s also the opportunity to stretch your imagination. If you have a good suggestion, you’re encouraged to go ahead and do it.”

As it turns out, life in the military and behind the counter of a coffee shop also is hyper-competitive. In addition to Hillcrest, Hansen and Jeanine have also laid stakes in the San Diego neighborhood of Tierrasanta and in the suburb of Santee.

The Hillcrest market, in particular, is heavily caffeinated with numerous national and local coffee shop chains dotting the landscape. Hansen and Jeanine, however, are undeterred. The couple opened a second location in the neighborhood earlier this summer at 1433 University Ave., just before celebrating their third wedding anniversary.

Hansen said the decision to open the new University Avenue coffee shop was two-fold and is partially linked to uncertainty at the flagship Park Boulevard site. The building is on the market, Hansen said, and could be targeted for redevelopment in the future.

“We’re going to stay open [on Park Boulevard] for the foreseeable future,” Hansen said. “We decided to open the shop on University because we wanted to be able to stay in the neighborhood. It’s a beautiful space.”

While she is quick to note the number of other coffee establishments in close proximity in Hillcrest, Jones walks back any notion the rivalry among the different businesses is anything less than cordial.

“Yes, there is competition, but it’s all very friendly,” Jones said. “We talk with one another, and we frequent one another’s shops. Coffee is all about community.”

From a marketing standpoint, Hansen and Jeanine said they believe there are several features baked into their business model that have carved out a healthy niche. When they took over Jitters on Park, the couple had been serving coffee from an outside supplier. But they soon decided to bring it in house.

Industrial Grind is considered a micro-roaster, meaning 200 to 300 pounds of beans are cooked each week.

The Chief Blend (in homage to their Navy careers) is among the company’s custom brews. It offers such qualities as earthy, chocolate, light citrus and smoky notes. Another variety developed within the shop is the Callie Blend, which has berry, chocolate and brown sugar notes.

“Barb was the brains behind the micro roasting,” Hansen said, adding that Jeanine took roasting classes and worked in a commercial kitchen to perfect the product.



More recently, Hansen and Jeanine also created their own from-scratch bakery and began supplying it to other businesses. The company’s entire line of breads, muffins and other goodies is gluten-free.

Through all of the blood, sweat and tears, Hansen and Jeanine said they are grateful for this chapter of their lives.

“We just kept winding up back in San Diego [while serving in the Navy], and we decided we would stay here,” Jeanine said. “There’s a tremendous amount of loyalty in this community,

and we appreciate our whole team.”

Hansen added, “San Diego is very special to us.”

For more information on Industrial Grind, visit [industrialgrindcoffee.com](http://industrialgrindcoffee.com).

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