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Sweet success for ice cream

By KAREN GOODGER - The Nelson Mail Last updated 12:30 08/08/2009

Philip van der Waal constructed houses for 25 years but he's enjoying much sweeter success from his switch to ice cream development.

Mr van der Waal bought the Penguino gelato store in Nelson last year and within his first year of operation, he's picked up four medals at the New Zealand Ice Cream Awards.

One of his creations, the coffee cream gelato, comes from mixing his product with Kush coffee produced by Nelson coffee roaster Andy Budd.

Mr van der Waal said Kush coffee appealed to him because it was organic and fair trade. Mr Budd helped with the recipe, he said.

It earned Mr van der Waal a silver award, as did his mango lassi gelato and blackcurrant sorbet creations. His lavender and honey gelato was the icing on the cake, bringing home a gold medal as the best gelato or sorbet in the open creative section.

"Probably the secret is to be passionate. I'm passionate about ice cream and I just want to get the best ice cream possible."

Mr van der Waal said the last house he built was a 355sqm home in Richmond that took him a year to complete. "Of a sudden, I was burned out. I just had enough of it. It was a drag to go to work."

He hasn't looked back since buying the gelato store.

"Often I feel like a little kid in a playhouse. There's a lot of trial and error and all of a sudden, there's a new flavour. It's really about delighting people."

Although the awards were in May, Mr van der Waal's shop has been closed since then for its usual winter break as he's "done a lot of research" while travelling to places such as Ireland, the United States and Holland.

"I've come back with so many ideas and I'm so keen to implement them." The shop reopened last Saturday.

Mr Budd congratulated Mr van der Waal, saying his success at the awards was "fantastic".

"Obviously he has some passion and he's getting in there." He said the Sprig and Fern was also using Kush coffee in one of its beers. "It's nice to have these little marriages."