
Arico Foods CEO Wins Leadership Award

Arico CEO Angela Ichwan was named the recipient of the Portland Business Journal's coveted Orchid Award, the publication's annual recognition of 25 women from the Portland business community who have demonstrated extraordinary leadership and accomplishment. Ichwan was honored for her achievements during a ceremony at The Women in Business Party and Expo, held last night at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland. Ichwan is profiled in today's Portland Business Journal's "Women in Business" issue ...

"It's a great honor to be recognized for this prestigious award," said Ichwan, who was selected for the award from a pool of more than 250 nominees. The winners were chosen on the basis of their outstanding business and civic accomplishments.

Ichwan, a food scientist and former global food developer for Heinz and Kellogg, launched Arico Natural Foods with her husband Hermanto Hidajat in 2004. Their inspiration came from Ichwan's 11-year-old autistic niece, Ella, whose quality of life significantly improved after adopting a diet free of gluten (the protein found in wheat) and casein (the protein found in dairy).

With an aim to promote "mindful snacking," Arico introduced a line of whole-grain, gluten- and dairy-free cookie bars in 2005. The popular product quickly propelled Arico to the top; in 2006, the market research firm SPINS named Arico the fastest-growing gluten-free cookie maker in the country. The company has since launched a line of cookie packs and two more cookie flavors, as well as a line of all-natural cassava chips.

Ichwan is committed to raising awareness for autism and celiac disease (an auto-immune disease characterized by intolerance to gluten). Under Ichwan's direction, Arico has reached out to autism and celiac disease support groups nationwide, participating in community events and fundraising walks, helping to support those who live gluten free.

Ichwan is also passionate about employing sustainable business practices. As part of its commitment to environmental responsibility, Arico invests in forest restoration projects through Green Mountain Energy Company to offset 100% of the carbon emissions produced by its business operations in Beaverton, OR. Arico also gives back to the environment by planting a tree for every store that carries its cassava chips. In 2007, Arico worked with American Forests to plant trees on the Indonesian island of Sumatra to help preserve the habitat of the endangered orangutan.