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Brews brothers

Courtesy photo Randy Evans, left, and Rick Evans began their business in September 2009 as the Sandpoint Coffee Roasters. They later changed the name to Evans Brothers Coffee.

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Brews brothers By Press staff

Randy Evans spent a decade in the coffee business prior to starting Evans Brothers Coffee. His passion for coffee was fueled while living in Italy. He later opened and managed a high-end cafe on the island of Maui, in Hawaii, and became an apprentice roaster. Randy, 36, then became the head roaster at Storyville Coffee in Seattle. His brother, 39-year-old Rick Evans, had a background in sales and marketing in the resort industry.

He sold Resort Real Estate in Hawaii and on the West Coast, moving to Sandpoint to work with Sotheby's real estate. The brothers, both ski fanatics, relocated to Sandpoint four years ago to raise their young families together and plant roots. Randy had taken a job in Sandpoint with a roaster manufacturer, selling the machines he had roasted on for years. But he lost his job in the first 90 days. Randy and Rick spent time skiing Schweitzer, north of Sandpoint, and brainstorming how Randy could remain in Sandpoint and in the coffee business. Rick encouraged him to start his own roasting company, though they had no money and no idea how to begin. They wrote up a business plan, borrowed a down payment, and ended up with a loan. Randy's dream became a reality. It took only a short time for Rick to realize how great the coffee business was, so he left real estate. Their coffee roasting business began in September 2009, as the Sandpoint Coffee Roasters. They changed to Evans Brothers Coffee, located at 524 Church St., in Sandpoint. Rick said, "We feel like we were very fortunate to end up in such a unique location, by the historic grainery tower in downtown Sandpoint's 'westside.' The funky atmosphere is a local favorite." They started roasting coffee with no customer accounts. Today they have 40 to 50 wholesale accounts. "Coeur d'Alene is an area we are definitely focusing on," Rick said. Their coffee is at Pilgrim's Market, in Coeur d'Alene; Bella Rose, in Coeur d'Alene; Local Grind Cafe, in Hayden; and the Caruso's Sandwich Co. shops. He said they roast about 500 to 800 pounds of coffee per week.

"We hope to be hitting 1,000 pounds by next year," he said.

They operate in about 2,500 square feet of leased space, which includes a 1,200-square-foot roasting studio. The brothers have two employees.

The brothers work to educate customers on the stories behind their coffees, and the differences among regions and farms.

They hosted what they called a Coffee Aroma Challenge, an event demonstrating the difference between dry and wet processed Brazilian coffees, coffees of Africa, and more.

They are hosting a "Meet the Farmer" event at 10 a.m. on Saturday with brothers Miguel and Guillermo Menendez, whose family owns a coffee farm in El Salvador. The event will be at the Evans Brothers Coffee studio.

Randy just returned from an "origin coffee tour" to the Menendez family farm, and they are establishing what's called a "direct trade relationship."

At Meet the Farmer, they will show customers the components in bringing coffee from the cherry on a tree to a mug. The greatest business challenge they are facing today is the rise in coffee prices on the commodities market.

The price for raw coffee has increased 40 percent since they established the business. Experts forecast continued price increases. This is due to many factors, such as global climate changes leading to lower supply, along with increased worldwide demand.

The brothers said they have received help from the Idaho Small Business Development Center, in Post Falls. They wanted to tap into the experience, for free, the people there have.

The brothers met with Mike Wells, a counselor at Idaho SBCD, on a regular basis early on in their business planning, well before they ever met with a bank.

Rick said, "It's easy to be in love with an idea, and no one goes into business to fail. However, most unfortunately do. I think it's critical to look at your business from a worst-case as well as best-case scenario."

The brothers learned to take a realistic self-appraisal. They hired a bookkeeper immediately, knowing they wouldn't take the time to manage it correctly.

"We've continually sought advice from experts in certain areas," Rick said.