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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Loquat Green Tea Receives Global Recognition**

*Global Tea Championship Nets Local Tea Room Silver Metal*

**New Port Richey, Florida** – Just in time for the annual Florida Loquat Festival in New Port Richey, Florida, Kelly Hackman, owner of The White Heron Tea & Gifts (also located in New Port Richey), has announced that one of her tea room’s proprietary tea blends that was entered in to the Global Tea Championships and has received a Silver Metal.

Several months ago, Dell deChant, organizer of the Florida Loquat Festival, and Hackman talked about developing an herbal tea utilizing leaves from the loquat trees that are found in abundance in New Port Richey. After researching how to make that happen, Hackman settled on developing a tea utilizing green tea from her shop to make a commemorative tea for the event.

“There is a lot that goes into processing leaves from the loquat trees, so I talked with Dell and decided that for this year we would utilize a green tea and produce a tea that has the loquat flavor,” Hackman says. “We are continuing to look into way to utilize the loquat leaves for herbal tea in the future, but it will take some time to figure out the logistics of how to make that happen.”

In the meantime, Hackman decided to work on developing a green tea blend that would capture the essence of the loquat fruit. She chose to work with a specific green tea to be able to maintain the positive health benefits that come from drinking tea, and combine that with a locally grown product. Her tea was in development for nearly six months before the perfect recipe was created. The final product, Luscious Loquat Green Tea, a sencha green tea flavored with natural loquat extract.

“Finding the prefect blend of flavor and tea can be difficult,” Hackman explains. “I chose to work with a Sencha green tea because that particular tea is of Japanese tradition, and loquats are found in Japan as well. The flavor of the sencha, I felt, would complement nicely with the fruity loquats.”

Then, in an interesting turn of events, Hackman decided to submit the tea blend into this year’s Global Tea Championships.

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**Global Tea Cont.**

The Global Tea Championships are held two times a year (fall and spring) in Colorado, and each competition evaluates different teas depending on their growing / production season. The competition receives hundreds of submissions from around the world from growers, processors, and blenders of teas. It is an independent competition, judged by tea professionals to distinguish the highest quality and best tasting teas commercially available.

Hackman's Luscious Loquat Green Tea received the highest honor of Silver Medal in the category, Flavored Green Tea (no gold medal was awarded in this category this year). The ranking is based on points the judges give to each tea they test. Luscious Loquat scored the most points in its category in the competition, making it the highest ranked Flavored Green Tea in this year's competition.

"Receiving nice compliments on a tea that we worked so hard to create, using a fruit that is grown locally, is something we are very proud of," Hackman states. "Personally, I think this tea did so well because the loquat is such a unique fruit that not many people know about."

Luscious Loquat was complimented in the competition as being "juicy." In the competition, that equates to "an excellent all-around tea that you just cannot stop drinking. The tea is divine." Those comments are something that guests at the Florida Loquat Festival will want to do a lot of, drink her tea.

The tasting description of Luscious Loquat is: "Tending slightly sweet, this tea is the perfect loquat blend tasting of peach, citrus, and mango notes melded together to create an aroma and flavor that will make you think you have stepped onto a tropical island."

Luscious Loquat will make its debut at this year's Florida Loquat Festival, being held at Frances Avenue Park in New Port Richey on Saturday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> from 10 am until 2 pm. There, attendees will be able to sample the Luscious Loquat Green Tea. It will also be available for purchase in 15 pack pyramid tea sachets at the event. After the event, the tea will be available exclusively at The White Heron Tea & Gifts, 6228 Grand Boulevard, New Port Richey.

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