

# ***HIGHLY COMMENDED TEA AWARD***

***FROM THE WHITE HERON TEA & GIFTS AND  
DRIFTWOD TEA COMPANY***



6228 Grand Boulevard  
New Port Richey, Florida  
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**[www.driftwoodbotanicals.com](http://www.driftwoodbotanicals.com)**

**Date:** November 28, 2023

**From:** Kelly M. Hackman  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Local Tea Blend Receives International Commendation**

*The White Heron Tea & Gifts is the only US-based Tea Company to be Recognized.*

**New Port Richey, Florida** – Local tea sommelier and owner of The White Heron Tea & Gifts and Driftwood Tea Company in New Port Richey, Florida has another recognition to add to her already award-winning brand.

Each year, the International Tea Academy, in partnership with Fortum & Mason, comes together to recognize and celebrate the world’s finest loose-leaf teas, and brings primary tea producers exposure to a global tea focused market. While the competition primarily focuses on tea growers and tea producers, this year’s contest also allowed for submissions of blended teas, where tea retailers could showcase their blends for judging.

“We are very excited to announce that we submitted two of our house-made tea blends, and that one of them received a “Highly Commended” recognition from the judges,” states Kelly Hackman, owner and tea sommelier of The White Heron Tea & Gifts and Driftwood Tea Company, from New Port Richey, Florida. “We are very excited to have our tea be recognized with such a prestigious designation, and even more excited that it came from great leaders in the tea industry.”

The tea that Hackman blended, and that received the “highly commended” designation was their Lavender Vanilla White Tea. This tea’s profile says that it is a delicate and slightly floral white tea that combines creamy vanilla and hints of lavender, to provide a relaxing and light beverage. It boasts that it’s the perfect tea for warm afternoons in the garden, though Hackman states that this tea is really a perfect tea for any time, and anywhere because of its delicate nature.

White tea is a lesser-known type, but still comes from the same camellia sinensis plant that more traditional black and green teas come from. White tea requires very little processing, which would make many think that it’s easier to tea for growers to make. Hackman states that’s not really the case. “Because you aren’t processing the leaf, there leaves more room for error in the grower’s and producer’s ability to create consistency among the different batches,” explains Hackman. “I also think that is one of the reasons I enjoy white tea so much, because of it's delicate nature, but the ability to blend and flavor well.”

**-next-**

**Leafies Commendation Cont.**

Just as exciting as receiving the “highly commended” designation for her tea blend, Hackman is honored that her tea was the one from a US-based company that received the “highly commended” designation.

“While we are excited that our tea blend was so well received by the judges, we are equally excited to be the only company to be recognized by this designation in the entire United States,” says Hackman. “We take great pride in representing our local US tea market on the international stage, and showing the rest of the world that we work with great tea.”

According to the International Tea Academy, “A Highly Commended award at the International Tea Academy Awards, The Leafies, in partnership with Fortnum & Mason, is given to some of the highest-scoring, best tasting teas within each category. Just 36 Highly Commended awards were presented across the 320 teas entered into this year's competition.

This is not the first time The White Heron Tea & Gifts has received international recognition for one of their tea blends. In 2019, their Luscious Loquat Green Tea received a silver medal in the Global Tea Championship.

“I really love working with teas, blending, and creating beautiful flavors for our guests to enjoy,” states Hackman. “As a self-proclaimed ‘foodie’, I have always loved putting together flavors. Some of my tea blends take months, and occasionally a year or more, to find the perfect blend and balance. For me, it’s all about taking unique teas, such as white teas, and building on their natural beauty, to introduce flavors that evoke a beautiful experience while drinking it.”

**# # #**

For more information about The Leafies or the International Tea Academy, please contact Jo Selman-Smith at [jo@teaacademyawards.com](mailto:jo@teaacademyawards.com)



THE  
LEAFIES

International Tea Academy Awards 2023

The White Heron Tea & Gifts

WINNER OF THE HIGHLY COMMENDED AWARD

Lavender & Vanilla White Tea



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Pettigrew'.

JANE PETTIGREW

UK Tea Academy Director

26th October 2023

THE UK  
TEA ACADEMY

FORTNUM  
& MASON  
EST 1707



# Lavender Vanilla White Tea



## Tea Profile

Delicate and slightly floral white tea combines with creamy vanilla and hints of lavender to provide a relaxing and light tea, perfect for warm afternoons in the garden.

## Ingredients

White Teas,  
Lavender,  
Natural  
flavoring

Photo of Lavender Vanilla White Tea being served at the International Tea Academy Tea Awards.





### **About Kelly Hackman and The White Heron Tea & Gifts**

Kelly Hackman is a World Tea Academy Certified Tea Sommelier and Tea Specialist, and the owner of The White Heron Tea & Gifts in historic downtown New Port Richey. Hackman entered the tea industry in 2016 when she designed a unique and refreshing tearoom in her town's historic downtown district. Breaking away from the traditional tearoom atmosphere of Victorian-era influences, Hackman chose to use her Florida location to create a destination reminiscent of a "tropical spa-like" resort. The

success of her tearoom has led to expansion over the past eight years, increasing her tearoom capacity to three times the original size and garnering her several awards for "Best Tea Room". Since opening her tearoom, Hackman has carved out a unique place in her town's landscape, drawing guests throughout the Southeastern United States and beyond.

In addition to the success of The White Heron Tea & Gifts, Hackman has continued to focus on providing the highest quality tea from around the world. Through her private-label tea brand, *Driftwood Tea Company*, Hackman works with tea growers and brokers around the world to seek out unique and flavorful teas that her guests will enjoy. Several of her personal tea blends have been recognized by various tea industry leaders as some of the best teas currently available. Her *Lavender Vanilla White Tea* was recognized with a "Highly Commended" recommendation in 2023 from the Leafie tea competition hosted by the International Tea Academy and Fortum and Mason; and her *Luscious Loquat Green Tea* was the recipient of a Silver Medal in the 2019 Global Tea Championships. Currently, *Driftwood Tea Company* teas are available at The White Heron Tea & Gifts, as well as online through the brand's website.

In 2023, Hackman launched a small botanical company that focuses on skin and natural health. Incorporating tea into an overall wellness lifestyle is very important for Hackman. She worked for several years and has recently released her own personal lotion line using matcha tea as a main ingredient to help sustain moisture and smoothness of one's skin.

For more information on Kelly Hackman, The White Heron Tea & Gifts, and Driftwood Tea Company, visit [www.thewhiteheronfl.com](http://www.thewhiteheronfl.com)

Current Brands of KB Hackman, Inc. include:

The White Heron Tea & Gifts: [www.thewhiteheronfl.com](http://www.thewhiteheronfl.com)

Driftwood Tea Company: [www.driftwoodteacompany.com](http://www.driftwoodteacompany.com)

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