

buying. Her company is less than five months old and she's already hustled enough to catch the fancy of Blackstones of Beacon Hill and the Gourmet Boutique at Copley.

And though she doesn't want to jinx it, a certain wedding Web site that rhymes with "the-not-dot-com" has queried her about featuring her wares as an option for favors.

Considering she's a one-woman show who mixes her concoctions at Nuestra Culinary Ventures, a sort of co-op of a kitchen facility in Jamaica Plain for enterprising cooks and food people, this new inquiry has her nervous but inspired.

"It's exciting to know it's a possibility," says Taylor-Kapoor. "I've been running around trying to learn pricing for bulk orders."

Taylor-Kapoor's research for the company began by accident, during her first trip to India to visit her husband's family in 1997. "When went to India [for the first time] in 1997, I was really fascinated by the culture," she said. Always an adventuresome home cook, she and her husband Al eat in more than they eat out. But she realizes that for busy people, cooking has become more of a hobby than a necessity. She just hopes to make what cooking they do a little more lively.

"I really want people to just learn about different cultures and try different cultures. It's like, it's not a one-step process: once they taste it, maybe they'll want to learn to spice up their own cooking."

That's one of the reasons that makes the Spice Genie recipes and suggestions on the packaging so alluring: it's kind of like one-stop shopping because all you really need to do is hit the store for ingredients, once you decide which spice blend to purchase.

And her recipes are as good as her food knowledge. As she shares the story of her young company in her home kitchen, Taylor-Kapoor

prepares a meal that highlights what she has learned from her husband's India-born family in the eight or so years that she's known him. She alternately explains the history of *nan*, Indian bread used most often as a tastier alternative to forks and knives for getting the dips and spreads on your plate and into your mouth; she explains that Indian cuisine does a great job of balancing spice and coolness, often offering a refreshing yogurt-based sauce or freshly diced cucumber to offset more picky main courses of flavorful, pureed vegetables and moist meats.

"All of the recipes [on the packages] have been tested," says Taylor-Kapoor as she cooks. During her pre-production, when she arranged focus groups of mothers to taste foods made with her spices, she had only a few criteria: was the recipe quick and easy to prepare, and did the recipe taste good enough to entice them to make it again?

Some of the recipes are slightly simplified versions of those of her expert-cook and mother-in-law, Rani. But I learn firsthand that Taylor-Kapoor is a good cook in her own right. After deciding last year to change careers (she got her master's degree in human services management and worked for a time for DSS), she enrolled in many hands-on cooking classes and has toured spice stalls in the Far East with spice experts to enhance her skills and knowledge which, clearly, has helped her spice mixing, as well.

"Spice is life; spices are everywhere," she says enthusiastically. And of her budding future? "My idea is to represent every part of the world. I have a basic Indian blend, but I'd like to offer [mixes for] different regions."

The cost of Spice Genie products range from \$3.50 to about \$8. It's smart to ring the stores that carry the items as not all things are available everywhere (though Gourmet Boutique carries both the spice lines and the sugars).

BCA celebrates past, looks to future

New board members announced at annual meeting

BY LOREN KING
ARTS EDITOR

The Boston Center for the Arts is coming off a banner year that saw the opening of the Sanford Calderwood Pavilion in September 2004 and a host of stellar exhibitions in the BCA's Mills Gallery. Although there is plenty to celebrate, BCA staff and board members say they are looking to a future that promises to be even more impressive.

At the BCA Annual Meeting at the Cyclorama on June 29, Libbie Shufro, President and CEO of the BCA, touted the BCA's growth and progress in its last fiscal year which marked "the year the BCA became a theater mecca in Boston," she said. The five resident companies — Suga Theatre, SpeakEasy Stage, Pilgrim Theater, the Theatre Offensive and Company One — staged works that drew more than 80,000 individuals to the live performances at the BCA, noted Shufro.

Speaking on behalf of Michael Maso, Managing Director for the Huntington Theater Company, board member William Quillan called the partnership between the Huntington and the BCA, and the opening of the Huntington's production of *Sonia Flew* that christened the 356-seat Wimberly Theater, "one of our proudest moments."

Other attendees at the meeting spoke of the achievements this year and goals for the

coming year. Ashley McCumber, President and CEO of United South End Settlements (USES), heralded the BCA's civic partnerships, particularly its work with neighborhood youth through after-school art programs that serve "200 kids within walking distance of this facility," he said.

McCumber and others stressed that the BCA is central to the diversity of the South End, where low income and subsidized housing coexists with luxury housing. "But the middle has dropped out," said McCumber. "There is a pronounced need for people to come together and what better way to do that than through the arts?"

A slide show showcased many of the BCA's triumphs in 2004-05. In addition to theater, the Mills Gallery, under the direction of Laura Donaldson, presented five major exhibitions that drew some 10,000 attendees. The BCA also hosted three major installations in the Cyclorama: "Lumina" by artist Wilfredo Chiesa; "Viewpoints," a retrospective of Fay Chandler; and a premiere of dance-inspired works by BCA studio artist Ralph Hamilton.

Board Chair David Hacin welcomed six new members to the board of directors: Philip Lovejoy, associate director of education programs, Harvard Alumni Association; Cary Lynch, senior vice president/regional manager, Sovereign Bank New England; Ruth Ginsberg Place, BCA studio artist; Fredi Shonkoff, senior vice president, corporate relations, Blue Cross Blue Shield; Claudia Swan, senior staff recruiter, Reebok and current board chair of USES; and Kathy West, vice president of real estate and facilities, Partners Healthcare System.